



IN MATTHEW'S MEDITATION



R. C. ROSE.

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IN MAIDEN MEDITATION

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BY

E. V. A.

“ I have gathered a posie of other men's flowers, and nothing
but the thread that binds them is mine own.”

MONTAIGNE



SIXTH EDITION

CHICAGO

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TO
That One

WHO HAS FIXED MY IDEALS, EMBODIED MY DREAMS,
AND DEEPENED MY SENSE OF THE POSSIBLE
BEAUTY OF EXISTENCE.

January, 1894.



AN EXPLANATION.

I HAVE wandered among many ages and climes of literature, and have picked up various bits of knowledge and beauties of sentiment. When, "In Maiden Meditation," I began to record the flying thoughts that have come in the midst of dinings and dances, I was often puzzled to know the children of my own brain from those of my adopted fancy. However, Mr. Emerson ranks the quoter of a good thing next to its originator, and I acknowledge that I have been a very Sabine, both consciously and unconsciously, in appropriating other people's goods. After all, who among us is wholly original? Not Homer, singing the myths and traditions of olden Greece, nor yet inspired Shakespeare, embodying into classic and enduring form the legends of all lands and ages. Our mod-

ern philosophers but interpret the wisdom of Plato, and each succeeding generation of wise men but gives the same answers to the same old questions that still defy solution. And there is no new thing under the sun. I have omitted the "pestiferous quotation-mark," assuming that my readers have wandered as widely as I have. They will recognize, I am sure, without further indication, the rare gems, which, as old friends, flash back smiles of recognition, and they will, I hope, appreciate and enjoy the new ones found on every page, deeming them worthy, if only in a small degree, of the good company in which they are found. It is, after all, only a simple record of a woman's moods, caprices, tendernesses, dreams. May the *mosaic* be judged harmonious, whether the fragments be seized from Diogenes or Dr. Holmes, from Balzac, George Eliot, or Julien Gordon, or whether they are only the dreams and theories of

E. V. A.

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AFTER THE BALL.

“IN MAIDEN MEDITATION.”



AFTER THE BALL.

“I heard as I hurriedly entered the door
The church clock strike twelve :
The last waltz was just o’er.”

WITH soul attuned to the exquisite melody of that last waltz, I am alone with my thoughts. The frolicsome rhythm of the *scherzo* seems to tell of the gayety and frivolity of the hours past ; the soft *andante* engenders sentiment and peace which, as the sounding brass becomes louder and more rapid, is merged into the vanity, emulation, and contention of the ball-room. Music was before speech, and is now beyond speech ; for language is not subtle enough to express the deepest, highest, tenderest longings of the human heart. Music is a language conveying the most vivid impressions, embodying the whole range of

emotions, from the delicate, ethereal tenderness of a dream of love, to the despairing wail of a nation borne down by the anguish of ultimate defeat.

Perhaps a funeral march — the heavy, alternating chords in the bass sounding like the rhythmic tread of armed men, the sobbing chords of a minor harmony freighted with the tragedy, the heart-break, of a thousand defeats — weigh one down as with the agony of a personal grief, when out of the tumult and anguish of the chant a heavenly melody soars like the prayer of faith. The soft murmur of a nocturne, the faint caressing *diminuendo* of the lullaby, the wailing harmony of the dirge, the melodious benediction that is like the "Peace be with you" of an angel, the tumultuous *crescendo* of emotion, like a majestic epic, becomes an awakening and a revelation. Only music can bridge the vast distance, and interpret to Heaven the prayers of men in all the omnipotence of their desires, in all the diversities of their woe, with the tints of their meditations and

their ecstasies, with the impetuous spring of their repentance, and the thousand imaginations of their manifold beliefs.

My ball-dress is thrown over the chair. Its freshness and purity are gone ; and as I gaze sorrowfully at its tattered condition, I sigh, not for "the fleeting show for man's illusion given," but for an undiscovered bourne, where woman's illusions and other trappings will be allowed to rest in peace. What a pretty, dainty gown it was, and how much the knowledge that it was becoming added to my pleasure ! The consciousness of being well dressed, it is said, imparts a blissfulness to the human heart that even religion is powerless to give or take away, and its importance can hardly be over-estimated by the feminine mind. The value of clothes was impressed upon the heathen, and they declared the art of weaving to be of divine origin ; for, according to Grecian mythology, a goddess was sent from Mount Olympus to teach this art to the Greek maids. The Hebrew mother, with constant toil, accomplished the covering for her

household. "She layeth her hand to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." The savage who adorns himself with strings of shells or with feathers has taken the first step towards civilization; and the tattooed is somewhat in advance of the unfrescoed.

Clothes have become among all nations an index of character. For woman in dressmaking, as man in legislating, does not proceed by mere accident, but the hand is ever guided by the mysterious operations of the mind. What meaning lies, not only in texture and design of our garments, but in color. From the sober drab to the high-flaming scarlet, mental idiosyncrasies unfold themselves in choice of color. Carlyle, after astute reasoning, arrives at the conclusion that "Cut betokens intellect and talent; color reveals temper and heart."

Authors realize how much depends upon the clothes that are worn by characters in novels, — clothes put on, not only to please the readers who are to associate with them,

but to exhibit the inner life of the characters. It is pretty well understood that women, and even men, are made to exhibit the deepest passions and the tenderest emotions by the clothes they put on. How a woman in a crisis hesitates before her wardrobe, and at last chooses just what will express her innermost feelings! At times, I think his Satanic Majesty himself sends a special messenger to preside over a woman's toilet, to peep and hide and beckon in the plait of a dress, in the curve of a girdle, on the tip of a shoe, in a coil of hair.

Does she dress for her lover as she dresses to receive her lawyer, who has come to inform her that she is living beyond her income? Would not the lover be spared time and pain if he knew, as the novelist does, whether the young lady is dressing for a rejection or an acceptance?

A clever man has acknowledged recently that clothes alter his very nature; that he could not help being fierce or daring with a plume in his bonnet, a dagger in his

belt, and a lot of puffy white things down his sleeves. But in an ulster he wants to get behind a lamp-post and call the police. A woman, I know, never appears to better advantage in any way — her talk is never so brilliant, her heart is never so loving and charitable, as when she is conscious of looking her best. A brilliant Frenchman declares he has theories concerning the veriest trifles, — gloves, boots, buckles, — to which he attaches the greatest importance, having discovered that a certain relation exists between the character of women and the caprice of costume. Each woman should know that the very folds of her drapery, each frill of lace, are but expressions of the inner self, betraying its boundless grace or its poverty of outline and expression. Is it not, then, the part of wisdom in women to stand for hours before the mirror in adorning this “perishable body,” to twist carefully the silken tresses, to guard tenderly the single cuticle that divides youth and gayety from wrinkled old age and loneliness, to puzzle and weary their minds in

youth by mathematical problems, lest they should fail to properly calculate the angle at which to wear their bonnets or the symmetrical ratio of a tie-back? Is it not time well spent, since the most trifling details of dress, the grain of cloth, the shade of a ribbon, may be uncomfortable revelations of character to appreciative eyes? Most women, I fancy, appreciate the importance of dress. Did you ever see a group of half-dozen women, arch, brilliant, mutinous, discussing some subject in secret conclave with such avidity that you long to know what it is, believing the topic to be something racy, wicked, delicious? When you draw near you discover that they are eagerly discussing whether petticoats are to be scant or full next season, flat at the hips or bouffant, drapery long or short.

It is exquisitely absurd to tell a girl that beauty is of no value, dress of no use. Her whole prospect and happiness in life may depend upon a new gown or a becoming bonnet; and if she has five grains of common-sense she will find out that love

itself will hardly survive a winter hat worn after Easter.

Men may pretend to like intellectual women, but they can pardon anything better than an ill-fitting gown. Better a thousand times (I say it after the most profound consideration) be frivolous than badly dressed. Moralists may continue to impress upon the world that beauty is a delusion, faces are masks (it is always, by the way, a feminine eye that detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the "dear deceit" of beauty) ; but it remains an axiom of life that a charming face can make a man campaign and fight and slay like a demon, can make a coward of him, can fill him with ambition to win the world, and can tame him into the domesticity of a dining-room cat.

It is true that behind those dark, soul-stirring eyes may be a heart devoid of one impulse of tenderness ; that the clear gray eye, no traitor to the heart, may reveal no insincerity, no want of frankness ; but if in the reaction of disgust you betake

yourself to a fishy eye, there is surprising similarity of result. One begins to suspect, after a while, that there is no direct correlation between eyes and morals.

Nature has a language, and is not un-
veracious; but we don't know all the intricacies of her syntax just yet, and in a hasty reading we may happen to extract the very opposite of her real meaning.

The love of beauty is shared by man with most animals. The wings of the moth are painted by love, by desire; and this is the foundation of the bird's song. For my own part, I have no less respect and deep sympathy for a man who has fallen under the witchery of a lovely face. Is it any weakness, pray, to be wrought on by exquisite music, to feel its wondrous harmonies searching the subtlest windings of your soul, the delicate fibres of life, where no memory can penetrate, and binding together your whole being past and present into one unspeakable vibration, melting you in one moment with all the tenderness, all the love, that has been scattered

through the toilsome years, concentrating in one emotion of heroic courage or resignation all the hard-earned lessons of self-re-nouncing sympathy, blending your present joy with past sorrow, your present sorrow with all your past joy? If not, then neither is it a weakness to be so wrought upon by the exquisite curves of a woman's cheek and neck and arms, by the liquid depths of her beseeching eyes, or the sweet childish pout of her lips. For the beauty of a lovely woman is like music ; what can one say more?

Beauty has an expression beyond and far above the one woman's soul that it clothes, as the words of genius have a wider meaning than the thought that prompted them. It is more than a woman's love that moves us in a woman's eyes. It seems to be a far-off mighty love that has come near to us, and made speech for itself there : the rounded cheek, the dimpled arm, move us by something more than their prettiness, — by their close kinship with all we have known of tenderness and peace.

A woman's arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the Parthenon, which moves us still, as it clasps lovingly the time-worn marble of a headless trunk.

The noblest nature sees the most of this impersonal expression in beauty (it is needless to say there are gentlemen with whiskers dyed and undyed who see nothing of it whatever) ; and for this reason the noblest nature is often blinded to the character of the one woman's soul that the beauty clothes. Whence the tragedy of human life is likely to continue for a long time to come, in spite of mental philosophers who are ready with the best recipes for avoiding mistakes of this kind.

All honor and reverence to the divine beauty of form ! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children, in our gardens and in our houses ; but let us love that other beauty, too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy. Paint us an angel,

if you can, with floating violet robes, and a face paled by celestial light ; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward, and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory. But do not impose upon us æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of art those old women with work-worn hands, men with rounded backs and stupid, weather-beaten faces, that have bent over spades and done the rough work of the world.

In this world there are so many common, coarse people who have no picturesque, sentimental wretchedness. It is needful we remember their existence, or else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, form lofty theories which fit only a world of extremes, and fail to sympathize with those men who have given the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things, — men who have seen beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them.

There are few prophets, few heroes, and few divinely beautiful women in the world. But beauty is not everything, and things may be lovable that are not altogether handsome. I think it is quite true that the majority of the human race have been ugly.

I have a friend or two whose class of features is such that the Apollo curl on the summit of their brows would be decidedly trying ; yet, to my certain knowledge, tender hearts have beaten for them, and their miniatures, flattering but still not lovely, are kissed in secret by loving lips. I have seen many an excellent matron who could never in her best days have been handsome, and yet she has a package of love-letters in a private drawer, and sweet children shower kisses on her sallow cheeks. And I believe there have been plenty of young heroes of middle stature and feeble beard, who have felt quite sure they could never love anything less magnificent than a Diana, yet have found themselves happily settled in middle life with a wife who

waddles. Yes, thank God, human feeling is like the mighty rivers that bless the earth: it does not wait for beauty; it flows with resistless force and brings beauty with it.

“Idle Thoughts of Idle Fellows” and “Reveries of Bachelors” have, from time to time, been submitted to our criticism. These lords of creation, lolling in easy-chairs, with lighted cigars, evolve, through clouds of smoke, theories concerning love, which is easy enough lighted, but needs constancy to keep it in a glow; or of matrimony, which has a great deal of fire in the beginning, but it is a fire that consumes all that feeds the blaze; or about life, which at first is fresh and odorous, but ends shortly in a charred cinder, which is fit only for the ground. They carefully consider, in their moments of solitude, whether it is best to dream on of a future Elysium, where only roses bloom, or reduce their visions to the dull standard of reality. And why not doubt, why not tremble, Bachelor or

Maiden, at so radical a change in your manner of living, so complete an interruption to all the habits of your life? Can a man stake his bachelor respectability, his independence and comfort, upon the die of absorbing, unchanging, relentless matrimony, without trembling at the venture? Can a woman find one who will realize the ideal of the "unknown god," which reigns in the heart of every woman, and to whom, like the Greeks of old, she constantly ministers and sacrifices?

"Why not," a bachelor queries, "go on dreaming?" Can any wife be prettier than an after-dinner fancy, idle and yet vivid, can paint for you? Can any housewife be more unexceptionable than she who goes sweeping daintily the cobwebs that gather in your dreams? If she becomes tiresome or provoking, he has only to open his eyes—she is gone, and the old free life continues.

Thoughts of this nature come with even more force to the minds of maidens, as they sit in their dainty boudoirs, building

castles in the air. For they realize that the trifling incidents of the day, the sympathy and approval of one man, make up their whole existence, and without them their lives are wrecked. There is no outside world to which they can flee for comfort ; no professional or business occupations with which to engross their minds ; no club-rooms where they can be amused.

Then, if a man feels no inclination to marry, he has only to remain passive and think nothing about it, while a woman has to listen to the arguments and entreaties of impassioned lovers, who picture connubial bliss in its most attractive guises, until she is won, often regardless of judgment and reason, yielding to the pride of being loved, which, Bulwer says, most women mistake for love.

Call this weakness, if you will, Mr. Bachelor, but picture yourself besieged by a lovely woman whose beauty and grace have already won from you the tribute of admiration ; to have her sweet voice tell you that you had become to her the embodiment

of all that was true and noble in man, that life without you would form a dreary waste : the sweet voice would falter, and the lovely eyes, suffused with tears, would by turns betray her love, her anxiety, her hope. If by reason of the “woody” fibre of your nature, you were enabled to say nay to her sweet pleading, would your manly strength resist a siege of this delicious flattery?

Are there many men who can resist the charm of the one woman who believes them to be heroic? And are not most men really better for the trust and faith that is placed in them by others?—as the earthen vessel, valueless in itself, becomes a thing of price and beauty under the loving hands of the artist, who draws graceful figures upon it, colors it skilfully, and handles it tenderly.

A wise philosopher recently discoursed upon the subject of a woman’s proposing. He argued in this wise. It is generally conceded that women have a clear conception of what they want ; and why should they be more handicapped than men in

obtaining it? Would they make more mistakes than men? It is impossible. All history teaches us that women have been accustomed to scheme for what they want, and alas ! as much after marriage as before.

It is no answer to the question, whether women will propose, to say that every woman can get married who wishes to do so, and that all history shows this. The real question is, is she free to marry according to her taste and inclination, and would she be happier in the majority of cases if she could honorably approach those to whom she is attracted, instead of waiting to be approached by those who are attracted to her? To this effect reasons a man, and so might I in some prosaic moment ; but the sound of one man's voice would put to flight such a theory in the minds of most women. For the sweetest music in the world to a woman's ears is the voice of a man telling her that he loves her, and it is music of so potent a character that it often melts a heart that was cold before. As for me, I cherish enough old-fashioned sentiment in

my heart to believe that the pleasure of being wooed far transcends the pleasure of wooing.

Maidens will continue to dream of that one who in time will whisper that all-important question. What different forms those ideals take in their visions ! We have but to glance at here a page and there a page of the past records of the race to feel quite sure that woman's ideal man has varied much in the tide of time. In the days of Homer, daughters yearned to be led from the parental roof by some Achilles of a youth, broad-chested, with a soul of adamant and an eye of consuming fire. At one period, the influence of Byron's powerful genius was plainly discernible upon the heroes of fiction of female authors. Again, a bloodless countenance was about all that was required to constitute a hero over whom the women went mad. He was depicted as cold and impassive apparently ; but the author would contrive to suggest by a delicate hint here and there that this coldness was in outward seeming only ; that this

stern, haughty possessor of the broad, pallid brow (against which he ever and anon pressed his hand as though in pain) was the clandestine owner of feelings fit to be compared to a stream of lava. In this nineteenth century, we find the ideal to be a man who parts his hair and his name in the middle, employs a London tailor, and can dance the German. My ideal, I think, varies with my mood. I like so many men for one particular quality, and so few men for all. I have sometimes fancied that I would like to boil down the characteristics of some ten or more men I know, take off the scum, and let the rest crystallize into a being who would respond to all my moods. He might become a Frankenstein monster on my hands, but even the risk would be alluring.

One man I like, because he brings me candy at the precise moment when my inner nature craves that form of sustenance ; another, because the fragrance of his flowers conveys to me a delicacy and refinement of feeling that his words could never express.

One wholly disapproves of me, and frankly exposes my faults and shortcomings in a way that affects me as a bracing tonic. And there is yet another who finds me perfect, and so skilfully does he word his creed of my perfection, that it penetrates my heart with sweet conviction, while my spirit in abject gratitude confesses his wonderful discrimination and judgment. One whom I know may be devoid of brains, but he dances divinely, and in certain moods he stands the favored one.

And I am all things to all men. To one, I am gay and frivolous, with no idea above the last morsel of society gossip, no hope of heaven but in looking sweet. To the next, I am an earnest, thoughtful woman. With this one, I display a lack of sense that is close akin to idiocy. Another suggestive, sympathetic listener calls forth treasures from my mind that I am ignorant of possessing. To one, I am cold and austere; to another, impulsive and loving. To only one, perhaps, of all my friends, do I open my heart, and show all the weakness, all the

pain, all the vain hopes and dreams. In no mood am I affected ; and the sad thought in moments of folly is, that a mood lies in one's nature, just as reflections do, and more ; and one can never do anything at variance with her own nature. We carry within us the germs of our most exceptional actions.

The froth and frivolity, the glare and triumphs of the evening are cast aside, and it seems that I have detached myself from the madding crowd, and from some high, secluded spot am watching, with pitying eyes, the throng hurrying and pressing on : some with great gaunt eyes and hollow cheeks, fiercely determined to win the race or die ; others beaten back and trampled down so often that each effort they make to rise becomes feebler than the last ; more still crushed into stupid, stolid hopelessness ; some sacrificing friends, honor, truth, to outdo the struggling, striving wretches who are spurring on in the mad race, which all hope to win, and after years of hope and toil and strong belief and perhaps final

victory, see all the warm glow and flush of success flicker and pale and fade to dull regret that it comes too late. This is the end ; the fruit is turned to ashes ! Utter sadness envelops me as a pall, as the hopelessness, the uselessness of it all is borne in upon me. Ah, mournful are these moments of isolation, when triumphs dissolve into the air, brilliancy is cast aside as a garment ; when, free from affectation, we stand face to face with our real selves, in that solitude which is the only sincerity of the soul ! We are on trial before the most pitiless of judges, and every thought and deed rushes forth to witness against us. God help the one who is self-condemned, who can find for himself no pardon for wrong done, no palliation ! Our ideals may be shattered, and with a sigh of regret we march on.

Our most trusted friends may deceive us, and, though hearts are torn with grief, we push bravely forward ; but when we ourselves have stained our souls by acts of which we proudly deemed ourselves incapable, have seen the fabric of character,

a fair structure reared with prudence and sincerity, crumble in a moment, — ah, then the footsteps falter, the way grows long, the heart weary.

What a difference in the way memories grow old ! Some incident that seemed a trifle at the time of happening grows more tender, more infinitely dear, as the days pass ; and I wish that I had grasped it and upon it hung all the hopes and ambitions of a lifetime. Another, which seemed equally unimportant, grows unpleasant, loathsome, as time passes, and seems to throw a baleful gleam over the whole after-life. How true it is that a small imprudence, helped by some insignificant accident, as an acorn is fertilized by a drop of water, may raise the tree on which we and others shall be crucified ! It is the fatal spell of destiny. From morning to night we are scattering the seeds whose harvest we cannot foretell ; and the soil in which they fall is the human heart, — a soil so rich that of all those seeds none utterly perish.

Ah, the turning-points in our lives, upon

which we rush with such recklessness ; and yet after they are passed, nothing is ever the same, and nothing can restore what has been lost or changed !

Memories are the landmarks of the past. Some gleam out like stars in the dreary path, shedding radiance and joy ; some are mournful crosses, gnarled and withered trees ; some the ruins of happy households : all of them helpful, if only heeded, toward finding one's way through the intricate fields of the soul.

Every wanderer has thus marked his progress, and is thus enabled to trace his thoughts, his motives, his results.

What a wide world is the past ! — a great and gorgeous, a rich and solemn world. Fancy fills it up, artist-like ; the darkness is mellowed off into soft shades, the bright spots are veiled in the sweet atmosphere of distance, and fancy and memory together make up a rich dreamland of the past. As in a lightning-flash I review the days of my past, with all the rapid changes of my life, — back, back, my mind wanders until it

reaches the home of youth, the village around which cluster such tender memories.

Life may and does change ; but we are not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of the first years will always make part of our lives. We could never love the earth so well, if we had no childhood in it, if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers, as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony, where everything is known, and loved because it is known?

What grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid blossoms, can ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home scene? The familiar flowers, the well-remembered notes, the sky with its fitful brightness, the furrowed and grassy fields, — such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle, inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them.

Our delight in the sunshine, in the deep, bladed grass, to-day, might be no more than the faint perception of weary souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years, which still live in us and transform our perception into love, — those hours which all one's life long can be looked back to with loving remembrance, which can gild and beautify the most sorrowful lives. It is surely a mistake to think that the memory of past delights makes present pain sharper. If not, why do we so universally strive to make children happy? Is it not because we know that happiness in the present will give a sort of reflected happiness, even in the saddest future? Is it not because we know, how in life's bitterest moments, its most barren and desolate places, we feel a warmth about our hearts, a smile about our lips, when we remember the old home days with the eager, childish interest and hopes, their vividly recollected pleasures, their sheltered luxuriance of fatherly and motherly love? The thought of those hours breeds perpetual benediction, — a benediction which

outlives the cares and troubles of later life, which we may carry with us to our dying day, and find perfected indeed in that Unseen where all we have willed, or hoped, or dreamed of, shall exist. The lives of children are proverbially and retrospectively happy. They have not yet trusted and been deceived ; not yet loved and been deserted ; not yet learned that flattery means self-interest, that honor in the eyes of men may be bought at the cost of self-respect, that gold can turn to rust, and success grow bitter as the apples of Sodom, that all earth's promises that glitter so temptingly never yet have stood the test of time. Yet the annoyances and griefs of children are very real to them, and often minor chords are sounded whose plaintive melodies echo through their whole lives.

It was years ago when my first sorrow came, like a chilling frost, repressing every instinct, stifling every impulse. It was a sunny day in early spring.

If it be true that Nature at certain moments seems charged with a presentiment

of one individual lot, must it not also be true that she seems unmindful, unconscious of another? For there is no hour that has not its births of gladness and despair, that does not bring new sickness or desolation, as well as new forces to genius and love. There are so many of us, and our lots are so different! What wonder, then, that Nature's mood is often in harsh contrast with the great crises of our lives? On this bright day, when grief seemed so discordant, and fate hid her cold and awful face behind a radiant veil, beguiling with soft breezes and poisoning with violet-scented breath, my mother died. She was still so beautiful, and seemed so young and full of life and activity, that the idea of separation had never crossed my thoughts, save as a very distant prospect, softened by the gradations of age and by the shortness of time I should have to pass in the world after this farewell.

How much more I might have loved her! Do we ever repent our tenderness to one we have lost? If we could only

realize how short life is, how little time we have for gladdening the hearts of fellow-travellers, would we ever repress a kindly impulse, a glance of sunshine, a cheering word? Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind, ere Death leaves us to mourn our lost opportunities! The old, old fashion, — Death! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion, — Death. Oh, thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet of Immortality! Look upon us, angels of loved ones, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!

It is an exquisite and beautiful thing in our nature that when the heart is touched or softened by some happiness or affectionate feeling, or in the warm glow of triumph or success, the memory of the dead comes over it most powerfully and irresistibly. It would almost seem as if our better thoughts and sympathies were charms in virtue of

which the soul is enabled to hold some vague and mysterious intercourse with the spirits of those whom we dearly loved in life. Alas, how often and how long may those patient angels hover about us, watching for the spell which is so seldom uttered and so soon forgotten !

Life is a lonely affair at best. Only a mother's loving instinct ever comprehends us, and when that is gone our souls are indeed isolated.

The remoter stars seem a nebula of united light, yet there is no group that a telescope will not resolve ; and thus the dearest friends are separated from us by impassable gulfs.

“ Not even the tenderest heart and next our own
Knows half the reason why we smile or sigh.”

Each soul lives and dies alone. How long we live before we realize that life is the one breath we breathe, the while we say, “ I live ; ” before we are content to draw from every day its fullest uses and benefits unglorified by dreams of to-morrow ;

before we learn that whatever effort we may make to touch another life, it can but end in a longing that is never satisfied ! Day by day we knit bonds that bind until the blood flows, but do not join ; we tremble for the life of this one, or the love of that one ; we feel our hearts die within us, because this life has passed away from our grasp or that love has failed us in our need. All this we do, fighting through our little day ; and when the end comes, we must let go and journey out along the "lonely road" without a footstep timing ours, or a hand clasped in our own.

The days that followed this sorrow were very dreary ones ; and there is no hopelessness so sad as that of early youth, when the soul is made up of wants, full of eager, passionate longings for all that is beautiful and glad, thirsty for all knowledge, straining after dreamy music that dies away and will not come near, with no long memories, no superadded life in the life of others ; though older friends, who look on, think lightly of such premature despair, as if the

vision of the future lightened the blind sufferer's present.

The ambitions and rivalries of school-life, its first boastful importance as knowledge begins to dawn on the awakened mind, the ripe and enviable complacency of its senior dignity,—all blow over my memory, like the morning breeze along the meadows, and like that, too, bear upon their wings a chilliness as of distant ice-banks. At the end of my school-days another event occurred that made me pause and reflect upon the uselessness of the petty ambitions and strivings and rivalries of the school-room, which is only life in miniature.

No wonder I paused in fear and trembling as I was about to embark on that "unknown sea" on which sweet girl graduates so eloquently descant. The wide expanse had seemed so gay with ripple and wave, so musical with ebb and flow. Yet a fear crept over me that I might not make the voyage in safety, for did I not, right on the eve of starting, look with a pang at an empty shallop beside us, whose

dear young pilot had gone down before our eyes, ere we had put from shore? Yet she had stood with us on the hither side of that dark and troublous sea called Life ; had watched with us the pitching and tossing of the numberless barks that had gone before ; had seen some struggling amid the breakers, others going to pieces on the reefs ; still others drifting, dismantled and shattered, upon a shore already thick strewn with wrecks, yet had dreamed with us of smooth and sunny paths, across that pitiless waste of waters.

Those days are past now. The quiet childhood of humanity, spent in the far-off glades and by the murmuring rivers, is gone forever ; and human life has deepened to womanhood amid tumult, doubt, and hope. Its age of restful peace is past. It has its work to finish and must hasten on. What that work may be, what this world's share is in the great Design, we know not, though our unconscious hands are helping to accomplish it. Like the tiny coral insect, working deep under the dark waters,

we strive and struggle, each for our own little ends, nor dream of the vast fabric we may be building up for God.

There are some advantages, too, in beginning life with tragedy. It belittles all the rest into the province of the light comic. It is an immense safeguard and armor of protection to be at the bottom indifferent. I have learned to take the world genially instead of literally, and it is only in these quiet moments that I indulge in the luxury of woe. There is a good deal of satisfaction sometimes in being thoroughly miserable. As a rule, it is not trouble that makes us melancholy. The actuality is too stern a thing for sentiment. We linger to weep over a picture, but from the original we should quickly turn our eyes away. There is no pathos in real misery; no luxury in real grief. When men or women love to brood over a sorrow, and take care to keep it green in their memory, you may be sure it is no longer a pain to them.

I am glad when I see Regret walked with as a friend, — glad because I know the salt-

ness has been washed from out the tears. Time has laid his healing hand upon the wound, when we can look back upon the pain we once fainted under, and no bitterness or despair rises in our hearts.

The burden is no longer heavy, when we have for our past troubles only the same sweet mingling of pleasure and pity that we feel when old knight-hearted Colonel Newcome answers "Adsum" to the great roll-call, or when Tom and Maggie Tulliver, clasping hands through the mists that have divided them, go down, locked in each other's arms, beneath the swollen waters of the Floss.

Wise men may continue to talk of the influence of mind over matter, but my thoughts always seem to take tone from my physical condition. And when I am, as to-night, "so tired," I grow melancholy. Then I stop and think how poor the incentives and objects of life ; for few of us risk our salvation to win kingdoms and provinces, but waste what is best and noblest in us by teasing anxieties and petty

ambitions, for results not worth the striving for, scarcely worth the having when gained. Immortal beings though we are, our daily problems, our crying necessities, chiefly concern the questions what we shall eat, drink, and wear, — above all, how shall we answer our neighbors' expectations of us and put a good foot forward. What a feverish contest it is! Never ending is this wild procession. Day and night can be heard the quick tramp of myriads of feet, — some running, some walking, some halting and lame, but all hastening, all eager in the feverish race; all straining life and limb and heart and soul to reach the ever receding horizon of success. Their speed never slackens, their race never ends. There is no wayside rest, no halt by cooling fountains, no pause beneath green shades. On, on, on, — on, through the heat and the crowd and the dust; on, or they will be trampled down and lost; on, with throbbing brains and trembling limbs; on, till the heart grows sick, and the eyes grow blurred, and a

gurgling groan tells those behind they may close up another space.

The words, "What shall it profit?" ring in the ear like a death-knell, forming a solemn undertone amid the laughter of mirth and the plaudits of success. How we waste our brain tissue in trying to philosophize, and answer that endless, unanswerable question, *Cui bono?* Only one who has asked this question in bitter earnest, and fairly faced the answer, can know the horror, the blackness, the emptiness, of the abyss into which it plunges.

Retrospectively, life seems nought but a crumbling ruin, — a shattered column there, where a massive portal stood; a broken shaft of a window to mark a temple of happiness; a mouldering heap of blackened stones, where the glowing flames once leaped. Regrets and broken resolutions will chase over the soul like swift-winged night-birds, and all the unsteady heights and wastes of action will lift up distinctly and clearly from the uneasy but limpid depths of memory. The past may be gray

and mysterious, the present dark and full of terrors; but there is still a glorious future full of hope. I will go forth to meet that shadowy future with a brave heart, and let my thoughts revert with exquisite satisfaction to my castles in Spain. It is a country famously romantic. My castles are in perfect proportions, set in the most picturesque situations. I have never been to Spain myself, and it is not easy for me to say how I know as much as I certainly do about my castles in Spain. The sun always shines upon them. They stand lofty and fair in a luminous golden atmosphere, a little hazy and dreamy, perhaps, like Indian Summer, but in which no gales blow, and there are no tempests. All the sublime mountains and beautiful valleys and soft landscapes that I have not yet seen are to be found in the grounds. There is wonderful music there; sometimes I awake at night, and hear it. It is full of the sweetness of youth, and love, and a new world. I lie and listen; and I seem to arrive at the great gates of my estate.

They swing open upon noiseless hinges ;
and the tropic of my dreams receives me.
Up the broad steps, whose marble pavement mingled light and shadow print with shifting mosaic, beneath the boughs of lustrous oleanders and trees of unimaginable fragrance, I pass into the vestibule, warm with summer odors. I am no more alone. Together (sweet word that) we move on in company with noble men and beautiful women ; and through days and nights of eternal summer the stately revel of our life proceeds.

And I will dream my dreams, and attend to my Spanish possessions. I have so much property there that I cannot, in conscience, neglect it. All the years of my youth, the hopes of my life, are stored away like precious stones in the vaults ; and I know that I shall find everything convenient, elegant, and beautiful when I come into possession of my castles in Spain.

AFTER DINNER.

AFTER DINNER.

BREAKFAST is always a serious time for me, perhaps from an intuitive perception that it is taken at the beginning of a sacred day, — a day with all its possibilities and chances of what may happen, the fateful day which may change the whole course and current of a life.

In the evening the work is done. I still live, and have passed through all the dangers of the day. If, counting the things that I have done, I can find —

“One self-denying act, one word,
That eased the heart of him who heard,
One glance most kind,
That fell like sunshine where it went, —
Then I can count the day well spent,”

and can laugh and be merry at dinner.

The thought that comes to me immediately after a dinner-party is not so satis-

factory. It is what the French term *l'esprit de l'escalier*, the *bon mot* that might have been introduced, the retort that might have been given.

A clever sculptor that was who designed Opportunity as a god, whose face was covered with hair, — for men seldom know him when he comes to them, — and with wings to each foot, because once gone, he cannot be overtaken ; I have good authority, however, for the consoling thought that though it is nature to communicate one's self, it is culture to receive what is communicated ; and the magnetic experiment of conversation at a dinner-table is to me the most charming feature of society.

I have beguiled my time with varied amusements during the last few days.

Last night I went to the opera. It was a crowded night ; for the opera was one that appealed to the senses, and stimulating them to activity, left the mind free to pursue its own schemes, the orchestra and scenes forming an accompaniment and interpretation of the private dramas in the

boxes. (Is not all music, to tender and poetic souls, to wounded and suffering hearts, a text which they interpret as they need?)

Is not the charm of life somewhat depending upon a sense of its fleetingness, of its phantasmagorical character, a note of coming disaster in the midst of its most seductive pageantry, in the whirl and glitter and hurry of it?

Is there some subtle sense of exquisite satisfaction in snatching the sweet moments of life out of the very delirium of it, that must soon end in an awakening to bankruptcy of the affections and the dreadful loss of illusions? Else, why do we take pleasure — a pleasure so deep that it touches the heart like melancholy — in the common drama of the opera?

Do we like it because it is life, or because there is a certain satisfaction in seeing the tragedy which impends over all, pervades the atmosphere, as it were, and adds something of zest to the mildest enjoyment? How simple, after all, was the cre-

ated world on the stage to the real world in the auditorium, with its thousand complexities and dramatic situations; and if the little knot of players of parts for an hour could have had leisure to be spectators of the audience, what deeper revelations of life would they not have seen?

Desire for the dramatic is natural. People will have it somehow. In the country villages, where there are no theatres, the people enjoy the story of each other's lives; the most trivial incidents are magnified and talked about, — *dramatized*, in fact. Good theatres thus exert the wholesome influence of satisfying the natural appetite for that gossip from which nothing can be concealed, everything being used to create that illusory spectacle which the stage tries to give.

This afternoon found me in attendance upon one of those ingenious contrivances for amusement in this agreeable world, called a reception.

If an angel from the starry skies were sent down to inspect our social life, and

should pause at the entrance of a house where a reception is in progress, he would, I am sure, be sorely puzzled at the noise of our highest civilization. It may not be perfect, for there are limits to human powers of endurance ; but it is the best that we can do. It is not a chance affair. There are selected, picked out by special invitation, the most intelligent, the most accomplished, the most beautiful, the best-dressed persons in the community. The angel would notice this at once ; and he would be astonished at the number of such persons, — for the rooms would be so crowded that he would see the hopelessness of attempting to edge or wedge his way through the throng without tearing off his wings. An angel, in fact, would stand no chance in one of these brilliant assemblies, on account of his wings ; and he probably could not be heard, on account of the low, heavenly pitch of his voice. Men, by reason of their stolidity and deeper voices, can never be proficient in the art of screaming, and are carefully excluded.

If half a dozen ladies, meeting by chance in a parlor, should converse quietly in their sweet, ordinary home tones, it might be in a certain sense agreeable ; but it would not be fashionable, and would not strike the prevailing note of our civilization.

With restful satisfaction I thought of the dinner from which I have just returned, to which I had been summoned to meet one of the most famous writers of the day.

With great interest and a certain amount of dread we contemplate contact with any of these glorious gifted ones, who have sung of joy and sorrow, love and death, touching our hearts to quick sympathy, and soothing many an hour of pain and weariness. What a glorious achievement to pen even a few words which, whenever read, must bring a throb of restful pleasure to a human heart ! What a gift to have the transcendent genius that turns the very stones along life's road to precious gems of thought ; that finds speech in dumb things and eloquence in the ideal half of the living world ; that genius to which sor-

row is a melody, and joy sweet music, to which the humblest effort of a humble life can furnish an immortal lyric, and in which one thought of the divine can inspire a sublime hymn.

Nervously, yet happily, I looked forward to being face to face with this man, upon whose truth and philosophy I had leaned as upon the heart of a friend. He had looked into the human heart with sympathy and with truth; and in every line I had felt the noble soul that throbbed behind his words.

It is always interesting, I think, to feel the author in his book. I do not mean that confidential appeal to the "gentle reader" made by the old-fashioned novelist, who had an insinuating way of drawing you into a corner, as it were, away from the confusing scenes of the story. If any disaster was impending, you were warned of it in time. "But, reader, little did Arabella dream in her thoughtless mirth that she should never again behold the scene of her childhood," etc.

If any change of scene was made, the writer did not forget you, but politely remarked, "Come with me, reader, from the glittering halls of wealth to the abode of honest penury." By this means it was kept plainly before your mind that these events were only things in a book, and if you were unduly moved thereby, it was your own fault. The author had done his part toward averting from you a dangerous excess of emotion.

Relations between author and reader are not as familiar as they used to be. Now he tries to remain neutral; he states the case, and will not attempt to prejudice your decision, and he only gains by keeping his personality out of sight. But when you divine him through his books; when his words bear unconscious witness to what he has known and suffered, — then your interest is quickened.

It must not be forgotten, however, that there are certain writers who have the keenest appreciation of the æsthetic value of what is good and noble, although they

may be blind to its moral import. The tremor of feeling in their voices, the shimmer of tears in their eyes, when they speak of anything humanly pathetic, is not assumed, but for the moment entirely genuine. They comprehend the loveliness of self-sacrifice, though they have no notion of practising it; and the beggar in their path is a picturesque object to be studied or sketched, not a creature whose necessities demand relief.

It would require a Machiavelian reasoner to reconcile the preaching and practice of one author, who gave to the world works which revolutionized the educational ideas of his time and inaugurated a movement toward nature and simplicity, yet was capable of abandoning his children without compunction at the door of a foundling asylum.

Think of the vast difference between the uttered wisdom and acted folly of another, who wrote solemnly: "Death itself to the reflecting mind is less serious than marriage. Death is not even a blow, is not even a pulsation; it is a pause. But marriage un-

rolls the awful lot of countless generations." Afterwards, seeing an attractive young woman in the glamour of the ball-room, he exclaimed, "By Heaven! that's the prettiest girl in the room; I'll marry her." He did, and was as wretched as might have been expected.

It seems idle to waste time in trying to explain remarkable incongruities, for the weakness of the flesh will sometimes prevail over the strength of the spirit. Yet it is often startling to note how the intellect will keep itself high and white above the mire of a shameful existence, as if gifted with some immortal, self-preserving power.

A man may be to all intents and purposes morally degraded beyond redemption, yet still retain the bright ideal which finds voice in the words that seem so strangely at variance with his deeds. All is not lost till that is destroyed. It is a matter to be regretted that the hunger for personalities brings the author, at the present day, so plainly into view.

All his little failings and absurdities, com-

mon to human nature, are detailed mercilessly, making us wince when we contrast them with the words that have inspired us to nobler living. What does it profit us to know that one maker of literature is an undutiful son or a pitiless creditor? How much better it would be, if to us they could remain beautiful, mysterious voices, teaching, cheering, and consoling. Contact will dispel illusions. Humorists are never funny, barristers are never logical, and authors fail to materialize into that airy structure we have built upon their own words, the fancied personality gleaming through pages of glowing sentiment and noble truth ; and the book itself is much more apt to become the warm friend and trusted counsellor than the writer.

What a lovable friend a book is ! He is the master who instructs without rods or ferules, without hard words or anger, and without reward or money. If you approach him, he is not asleep. If investigating you interrogate him, he conceals nothing ; if you mistake him, he never grumbles ; if you are

ignorant, he cannot laugh at you. We rifle his pockets and put him aside at our pleasure, and he does not feel neglected. We invite him to a *tête-à-tête* before the fire, and fall asleep while he is doing his best to entertain us, yet when we awake his countenance is still unruffled ; doubtless because all the time he is aware that we still prize him. What strange things we do to those whom we love !

An old writer says : “ No matter how poor I am, no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling, if learned men and poets will take up their abode under my roof, if Milton will cross my threshold and sing to me of Paradise, and Shakespeare open to me the world of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin enrich me with his practical wisdom, — winds may blow and skies may rain, fortune may prove unkind, days may be lonely and evenings dull ; but for the true lover of reading there is always at hand this great company of companions and friends, — the wisest, the

gentlest, the best, never too tired or too busy to talk with him, ready at all moments to give their thoughts to instruct and entertain. They never disappoint, they have no moods or tempers, they are always at home, — in all of which respects they differ from the rest of our acquaintance.”

To-night I turned in grievous disappointment from this author, finding in him a man of ordinary appearance, without brilliancy of speech or grace of manner. As I listened to hear from him the crystallization of a thought that would perhaps prove an inspiration to me through months to come, my *amour propre* was deeply wounded at his first remark. It was aggressively commonplace, relating to the fine condition of the atmosphere ; revealing a desire to accommodate his genius to my poor feminine intellect, and a belief that I would be unable to fathom the meaning of a remark of deeper significance.

Most men disguise their thoughts for women, as if to venture into the feminine world were as dangerous as travelling in Africa.

One of the greatest misfortunes in the intellectual life of women is that they do not hear the truth from men.

All men in cultivated society say to women as much as possible what they may be supposed to wish to hear ; and women are so much accustomed to this that they almost resent an expression of opinion which takes no account of their personal and private feeling. This consideration for the feelings of women gives an agreeable tone to society, but it is fatal to truth. Observe a man of the world, whose opinions are well known to you ; notice the little pause before he speaks to a lady. During that pause he is turning over what he has to say, so as to present it to her in the manner that will please her best, and you may be sure the integrity of truth will suffer in the process. He professes to take an interest in things he does not care for in the least, and he passes over subjects and events which he knows to be of the most momentous importance to the world.

The lady spends an hour more agreeably

than if she heard opinions which would irritate, and prognostics which would alarm, her, but she has missed a golden opportunity for culture ; she has been confirmed in feminine illusions.

Conversation between men and women will always be partially insincere ; the highest culture, though, has a direct tendency to command sincerity in others, because it is tolerant of variety in opinion, and because it is so penetrating that dissimulation is felt to be of no use.

As women increase in culture, they may expect to be treated by men with more of the candor and frankness they bestow upon each other.

By the side of an uncultured woman a man feels that, if he speaks anything different from what she has been accustomed to, she will take offence ; while if he says anything beyond the narrow range of her information, he will make her uncomfortable. The most honest of men in such a position finds it necessary to be cautious, and can scarcely avoid a little insincerity.

But with a woman whose culture is equal to his own, these causes for apprehensions have no existence, and he can safely be more himself. Undoubtedly, women, if not queens and victors, are the law-givers in the art of conversation. Madame Necker compared their words to "light layers of cotton-wool in boxes packed with porcelain : we do not pay much attention to them, but if they were taken away, everything would be broken to pieces."

Men, however, seek the society of women during the hours of mental relaxation, and find such a charm in their presence, especially when they are magnetic or beautiful, that they are not apt to be very severe judges of the abstract intellectual quality of their talk, though they realize that the pleasure of conversation is always enhanced by any increase of knowledge.

Talleyrand's maxim was, that if you wanted to be thought agreeable in society, you must consent to be taught many things that you know already.

A wise and tactful woman who wishes to

be popular with mankind (and she is not wise if she does not) will, in the majority of cases, keep her intellect subservient to her graces and charms when in the presence of men. A man likes a woman's intellect to shine brilliantly in its full force only when great occasions demand. At other times he likes it veiled by her beauty and modesty. He would rather it would gleam like a star on his path, or suddenly glow forth in shadowed places like a powerful dark lantern, than to glare always about him like an electric light, that blinds the eyes of his egotism and offends his pride.

Minds can so easily make these opportunities for culture and the increase of knowledge.

When one woman moans she has no time for mental culture, another makes her chance.

Often when sewing or dressing, I have before me a book with marked passages, or a newspaper clipping, that I am conning again and again, or I am repeating some verse or sentiment that has struck my fancy.

I believe that the most delightful and satisfactory education is gained in this way, little by little, until it is wrought in the memory, is a part of one's being, and seems but the echo of one's own thought.

The condiments of my dinner came in the person of my right-hand neighbor, a cynic, a woman-hater, a pessimist, one who believed nothing but what he saw, and then convinced himself that he was the victim of an optical delusion, — one of those select natures, who hold that all great men are over-estimated, and small men are insupportable; that if you would ever love a woman without looking back upon that love as folly, she must die while you are courting her; and if you would maintain the slightest belief in human heroism, you must never make a pilgrimage to see the hero.

If I talked of women, he said he had never known but one sensible woman, and she was the one that declared there was only one fact reconciled her to being a woman, and that was, she would not have to marry one.

When marriage was discussed (the half-soul and other equally interesting theories having ardent supporters), he called our attention to the wisdom of Dr. Holmes, who declared that there are at least five thousand women in these United States, any one of whom the most fastidious young man would marry if he happened to be thrown with her and she had no objection. And to dear young ladies priding themselves on their discerning delicacy, he says there are twenty thousand men, any one of whom, offering his hand and heart, under favorable circumstances, they would first endure, then pity, then embrace. He agreed with Buckle that the number of marriages depends altogether upon the *price of corn*.

We talked of love,—we discussed the old subject, we said again the things that have been said so often; and that word “love” which came back ceaselessly, now pronounced by a strong man’s voice, now uttered by the frail-toned voice of a woman, seemed to fill the room, to flutter there like a bird, to hover there like a spirit.

Can one remain in love for several years in succession? Is love eternal? "Yes," affirmed some. "No," maintained others. We distinguished cases, we established limitations, we cited examples; and all men and women, filled with rising and troubling memories, which mounted to their lips, but which they could not quote, seemed moved, and talked of that common, that sovereign thing, the tender and mysterious union of two beings, with profound emotion and ardent interest. Cupid and Psyche! The young man and the young woman who are in love! The couple which is constantly vanishing and constantly reappearing; which has filled millions of various situations, and yet is always the same; symbolizing, and one might almost say embodying, the doctrine of transmigration of souls; acting a drama of endless repetitions with innumerable spectators.

What would the story-reading world — yes, and what would the great world of humanity — do without these two figures? They are more lasting, they are more im-

portant, and they are more fascinating than even the crowned and laurelled images of heroes and sages. When men shall have forgotten Alexander and Socrates, Napoleon and Humboldt, they will still gather around the imperishable group, — the youth and the girl who are in love. Without them our kind would cease to be ; at one time or another we are all of us identified with them in spirit ; thus both reason and sympathy cause us to be interested in their million-fold repeated story. And the old, old story of clinging hearts is more fascinating from age to age as human thoughts become purer and human feelings more delicate. Love, like all things earthly, is subject to the processes of the law of evolution, and grows with the centuries to be a more varied and exquisite source of happiness. The scoffing cynic, desirous of strengthening his position by distinguished witnesses, only muttered to me the words of Charles O'Malley, to the effect that what we hear of single or only attachments is mere nonsense. Love, like everything in

the world, requires a species of cultivation. The mere tyro in an affair of the heart thinks he has exhausted all its pleasures and pains ; but only he who has made it his daily study for years, familiarizing his mind with every phase of the passion, can properly or adequately appreciate it. The more you love, the better you love, etc.

To recover from the wounds my vanity received during this conversation, and to regain the usual contentment with my lot, I betook myself as soon as I reached home to the pages of Ruskin for consolation. Proudly I read : —

Shakespeare has no heroes ; he has only heroines. In his labored and perfect plays there is no hero, but almost always a perfect woman, steadfast in grave hope and errorless purpose. The catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man, the redemption, if there be any, by the wisdom and virtue of a woman. (Methinks I hear the mocking tones exclaim, “for instance, Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, Goneril, and Petruchio’s sweet and gentle

Kate.") In all cases with Scott, as with Shakespeare, it is the woman who watches over and guides the youth, it is never by any chance the man who watches over or educates her. ("Yes," my scoffer continues, "Meg Merrilies, Effie Deans, and Rob Roy's freckled-faced, red-headed, angelic Helen.")

Dante's great poem is a song of praise for Beatrice's watch over his soul ; she saves him from hell, and leads him star by star up into heaven. (Whose voice suggests that conjugal devotion should have led him to apostrophize the charms of his wife, Gemma, from whom he was forced to separate ; and that his vision of hell was a faint reflex of his domestic felicity?)

The cynic is incorrigible ; but before he so ruthlessly condemns, let him first comprehend the heart of woman, for if any man says that he understands woman, he is convicted of folly by his own speech.

Of men, it may be sufficient to say with David that they are all liars, though it may be allowed that some are curable of the

vice of falsehood. Of women, however, there is no general statement that is true. The one is brave to heroism, the next cowardly to a degree fantastically comic; the one is honest, the other faithless; the one contemptible in her narrowness of soul, the other supremely noble in broad truth as the angels in heaven; this one gentle as a dove, that one grasping and venomous as a serpent. The hearts of women are as the streets of a great town, some broad and straight and clean, some dim and strange and winding; or as the buildings of this same city, wherein there are holy temples at which men worship in calm and peace, and dens where men gamble away their souls. Does any man boast, then, that he knows the heart of a woman?

The heart of woman containeth all things good and evil; and woman in all her weakness is the strongest force upon the earth. She is the helm of all things human; she comes in many shapes, and knocks at many doors. She is quick yet patient, and her passion is not ungovern-

able like that of a man, but as a gentle steed she can guide e'en as she will, and as occasion offers can now bit up and now give rein. She has a captain's eye, and strong must be that fortress of the heart in which she finds no place of vantage. Does thy heart beat fast in youth? She will out-run, nor will her kisses tire.

Art thou set towards ambition? She will unlock thy inner heart and show thee roads that lead to glory. Art thou worn and weary? She has comfort in her breast. Art thou fallen? She can lift thee up, and to the illusion of thy senses gild defeat with triumph.

She can do all these things, for Nature ever fights upon her side ; and while she does them, she can deceive and shape a secret end in which thou hast no part. And thus woman rules the world. She is thy slave, O man, yet holds thee captive. At her touch honor withers, locks open, and barriers fall. She is infinite as ocean, variable as heaven, and her name is the Unforeseen.

The statement was recently set afloat that George Meredith understood and depicted woman better than any one who had preceded him ; and I have heard men wonder if this be true, or only a wily statement to throw men again off the track. Wise women encourage this notion of mystery, and men generally accept it. Mr. Warner, however, is of the opinion that women, conscious of inferior strength, have woven this notion of mystery about themselves as a defence ; and he insists that if novelists and essayists have raised a mist about the sex, in which it wilfully masquerades, it is time that scientists should determine whether the mystery is in nature or only in imagination. Women are not very mysterious objects to each other. Men can deceive men, men may occasionally hoodwink women, or be hoodwinked by them ; but it has not been given to one woman to throw dust in the eyes of another. The silliest girl can see through the most astute as though she were of glass.

Historically, it would be interesting to trace the rise of this notion of women as an enigma. The savage race does not appear to have it. A woman to the North American Indian is a simple affair, dealt with without circumlocution. In the Bible records there is not much mystery about her, and there is no evidence that the Egyptian woman was more difficult to understand than the Egyptian man.

It was, I believe, in mediæval times and the chivalric ages that women were first set up as being more incomprehensible than men, — that is, less logical, more whimsical, more uncertain in their mental processes. The writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries always took an investigating and speculative attitude toward woman, and Montaigne seems specially to regard her as a mystery.

Some one (that anonymous person who is always saying the wisest and most delightful things just as you are on the point of saying them yourself) has said recently that the mysteriousness of the soft sex is a

tradition only, and women are as easy to understand as men (honest creatures!), if only one did not blind one's capability of understanding them by presupposing them to be darkly complex. This opinion, coming from one of our keenest pens, made a decided impression; but that impression was shortly afterwards blurred by reading a story by the same writer, into which he introduces women most irrelevant and unreasoning, the most feminine of the sex, and makes remarks about them like these: "Who knows what is in a woman? How many moods in a quarter of an hour? And which is the characteristic one?" His first utterances were in the nature of an essay; his story was life. However, in spite of science and reason, she sits like a sphinx and smiles; and no man has yet read all the riddle of her smile, or known all the mystery of her heart.

Wise women, too, will continue artfully to foster, in the eyes of men, this conceit of their separateness and veiled personality.

Man is by nature a discoverer. He likes

suggestions, glimpses, possibilities. A flash of an eye under a veil, the gleam of a white neck under soft filmy stuff, are more effective with him than the steady look of an unveiled face or the most *décolleté* gown ever worn. So, too, a fleeting glimpse of individuality, a suggestion of the real woman, stirs him, sets him thinking, wondering, longing to explore the hidden treasures of a personality.

And the woman who can whet curiosity, give vague, shadowy hints of her real self, can allure, repel, cajole, command, grow scornful and tender in one breath, battle bravely and yield gracefully, is the woman of all women who will fascinate men. . . .

It has been said that flippant minds are readiest in speech, because their supply of ideas is so limited that they have only to hurry them forth. Well-stored minds, in pausing to reflect which of their theories or opinions shall be advanced, proceed more slowly, and are rarely fluent.

Perhaps this is the reason that the conversation this evening, in spite of the

intellect and talent gathered there, was commonplace. It is true, however, that the commonplace needs no defence, since everybody takes to it and thrives upon it. Great is the power of the commonplace.

Beloved and read and followed is the writer or preacher of the commonplace. Is not the sunshine common, and the bloom of May? Why struggle with these things in literature or in life? Why not settle down upon the formula that to be platitudinous is to be happy?

When one of us who has been led by native vanity or senseless flattery to think himself possessed of talent arrives at the conclusion that he or she is ordinary or even dull, it is one of the most tranquillizing and blessed convictions that can enter a mortal's mind. All our failures, all our shortcomings, our strange disappointments in the effects of our own efforts, are lifted from our bruised shoulders, and fall like Christian's pack at the feet of that Omnipotence which has seen fit to deny us the pleasant gift of high intelligence, and made us commonplace.

In any gathering, how little we have to boast in the way of conversation ! Locke, when in company with certain English lords renowned for their wit, amused himself by taking down the conversation, and caused them to roar with laughter as he read aloud the result and asked them to say what they could make of it. The truth is, the upper classes in all nations have a certain jargon and glitter of talk, which, if burned in the embers of literary or philosophical thought, would leave a very small residuum of gold in the crucible.

When one reflects how much of conversation is mere purposeless impulse or habit, and how few talkers express their real final sentiments, it seems that no one should be held altogether accountable for what he has said. Nothing so surely kills the freedom of talk as to have some matter-of-fact person instantly bring you to book for some impulsive remark flashed out on the instant, instead of playing with it and tossing it about in a way that shall expose its absurdity or show its value.

A person cannot tell very well what he does think till his thoughts are exposed to the air, and it is the bright fallacies and impulsive rash ventures that are most fruitful to talkers and listeners. I have seen the most promising paradox come to grief by a simple "Do you think so?"

Racy, entertaining talk is only exposed thought, and no one would hold a man responsible for the thronging thoughts that contradict and displace each other in his mind.

A man had better be silent if he may not launch into the general talk, the whim and fancy of the moment; or if he can only say to-day what he will stand by to-morrow, for fear of being considered inconsistent. None of us seem able to shake off that reverence for a past act or word, for we realize that the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past, and we are loath to disappoint them. Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict what you have said in this place or that place?

Mr. Emerson assures us that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen, philosophers, and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks, though it contradict everything you have said to-day.

All original, independent action exerts a powerful magnetism. The soul always hears an admonition in originality on any subject. The sentiment it instils is more valuable than the thought it contains.

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius.

A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light from within more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice this thought, because it is his own.

In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts ; they come back

to us with a certain alienated majesty. I believe any man can be really great if he will only trust his own instincts, think his own thoughts, and say his own say. The stupidest fellow, if he would only reveal with child-like honesty how he feels and thinks when the stars wink at him, when he sees the ocean for the first time, when music comes over the waters, or when he and his beloved look into each other's eyes, — could he but reveal this, the world would hail him as a genius, and would prefer his story to all the epics that ever were written from Homer to Scott.

Intelligence having been insulted by the condescending author, my sensibility was wounded later in the evening. A youth with a simpering admiration informed me that I was "Such a flirt," — the suggestive pause convincing me that he shared the general impression of misguided youths, who fancy that to be a flirt is the *summum bonum* of a woman's ambition, and that he can offer her no more intoxicating incense than the expression of such an opinion.

I hate a flirt, and almost agree with Dr. Talmage, that "flirtation is damnation." A flirt must necessarily have a coarse-grained soul, — well modulated and well tutored, but there is no fineness in it. All its native fineness is coarsened by coarse efforts of the will. True feeling is a rustic vulgarity the flirt does not tolerate, yet she will play you off a pretty string of sentiment she has gathered from the poets, and adjusts it as prettily as a Gobelin weaver adjusts the colors in his broidery. She shades it off delightfully. There are no bold contrasts, but a most artistic mellowing of tints. She smiles like a wizard, and jingles a laugh such as tolled the poor home-bound Ulysses to the Circean bower. Her words sparkle and flow hurriedly and with the prettiest doubleness of meaning. Naturalness she copies, yet scorns. She measures her wit by the triumphs of her art. She chuckles to herself over her own falsity. She is always gay because she has no depth of feeling to be stirred.

She counts on marriage not as the great

absorbent of a heart's love and life, but as a feasible and orderly conventionality, to be played with and kept at a distance, and finally to be accepted as a cover for the faint and tawdry sparkles of an old and cherished heartlessness. She will not pine under any regrets, because she has no appreciation of any loss ; she will not chafe at indifference, because it is her art ; she will not be worried with jealousies, because she is ignorant of love. With no conception of the soul in its strength and fulness, she sees no lack of its demands. A thrill she does not know, a passion she cannot imagine ; joy is a name, grief is another ; and Life, with its crowding scenes of love and bitterness, is a play upon the stage.

I tread on delicate ground, — ground, alas, which many a girl treads boldly, scattering much feather-bloom from the wings of poor Psyche, gathering for her hoards of unlovely memories, and sowing the seed of many a wish that she had done differently. They cannot pass over such ground, and escape having their natures more or less

vulgarized. I do not speak of anything counted wicked, but of gambling with the precious and lovely things of the deepest human relation. If a woman with such an experience marry a man she loves, will not she now and then remember something it would be joy to discover she had but dreamed?

What will the true king have when he comes to his throne if his golden tribute has been wasted on every passer-by?

There is a distinction to be made between coquetry and flirtation; and no attractive woman is free from a certain amount of coquetry. A coquette sparkles; but it is more the sparkle of a harmless and pretty vanity than of calculation. She only whets the appetite, while a flirt depraves it. She does not regard all men as possible lovers. Perhaps a day will come when the clear, sparkling eyes will droop, and the brave mouth tremble, in the presence of a man; but not for every man does she lose her sweet freedom and fearlessness.

Ah, Mr. Bachelor, you see a coquette in your revery, dancing before you with sparkling smile, teasing you with the prettiest graces in the world, maddening you with hope and fear ; but as you watch her with your whole soul in your eyes, you see her features relax to pity, as a gleam of sensibility comes stealing over her spirit, and then to a kindly, feeling regard. And if you could whisper some of these vagaries that grow on your fancy in lonely hours into her listening and loving ears, — ears not tired of listening because it is you who whisper ; ears ever indulgent because eager to praise, — and if your darkest fancies were lit up by a ringing laugh from that sweet face turned up in fond rebuke, how far better than to be waxing black and sour over pestilential humors alone ! And if, when a glowing thought comes to your brain quick and sudden, you could tell it over as a second self to that sweet creature, who is not away because she loves to be there ; and if you could watch the thought catching that girlish mind, illumin-

ing that fair brow, sparkling in those pleasantest of eyes, — how far better than to feel it slumbering and going out, heavy, lifeless, dead in your own selfish fancy. And if a generous emotion steals over you, coming you know not whither, would there not be a richer charm in lavishing it in a caress or endearing word upon that fondest and most cherished one than in patting your glossy-coated dog or sinking in loneliness to your slumbers?

If, in short, you were no bachelor, but the husband of some sweet image, and in that chair yonder were seated a sweet-faced, true-hearted woman, and if you could reach an arm round that chair-back, without fear of giving offence, and suffer your fingers to play idly with those curls that escape down the neck; and if you could clasp with your other hand those little, white fingers of hers, which lie so temptingly within reach, and inspired by her sweet sympathy talk softly and low, — the hours would slip by without knowledge, and the winter winds whistle uncared for.

And if she should turn her head daintily to one side, and look lovingly into your eyes, and your fingers should close fast and passionately over her hand, like a swift night-cloud shrouding the pale tips of Dian, and your eyes should draw nearer to her laughing, teasing, loving eyes; and you should clasp her shadowy form, and your lips should feel the warm breath, growing warmer and warmer, — would you then, O scoffing Bachelor, so gladly banish her to *Dreamland*?

AFTER CHURCH.

AFTER CHURCH.

“IF I have all faith, so that I can move mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing.”

Two types of ministers dwell persistently in my mind to-night, suggested by the services of the day.

The first, the Reverend Dismal Horror, author of that profitable volume, “Groans from the Bottomless Pit to awaken Sleeping Sinners.” He was a rousing young dissenting preacher, who had frightened into fits half the women and children and one or two old men of his congregation, giving out among several similarly cheerful intimations that they must all necessarily be damned, unless they immediately set about making themselves as miserable as possible in this world.

He had proved to his trembling female hearers, in effect, that there was only one

way to heaven, — through his chapel ; that the only safe mode of spending their time on earth was reading such blessed works as that which he had just published, and going daily to prayer-meeting. On Sunday he had preached a sermon, “to improve the death” — such being his impressive phrase — of a Miss Snooks, who had not been a member of his congregation, who, having been to the theatre on a Thursday night, was taken ill on a Friday, and was a lifeless (?) corpse when the next Sunday dawned. So the minister this morning railed of Progressive Euchre (which he declared was rightly named, because it was progressing to the devil), and pointed out with awful force and distinctness how cards and novels were the devil’s traps to catch souls, and balls and theatres easy cuts to — ! And men who had defrauded their neighbors, got the best of a little business transaction, as it were, women with slanderous tongues or violent tempers, who had deprived each other of honor and purity, or who had destroyed

the peace and sanctity of their own homes by words that sever hearts more than sharp swords, nodded in a gratified approval, and uttered loud and sonorous "Amens."

In powerful contrast to this style is the Reverend Morphine Velvet. His is a fashionable church, — a church of ease ; for it was a very easy mode of worship, discipline, and doctrine that was there practised and inculcated. I should say — not intending irreverence — that Mr. Morphine Velvet's yoke was very easy, his burden very light. There was a sort of soothing, winning elegance and tenderness in the tone and manner in which he prayed and besought his dearly beloved brethren, as many as are here present, to accompany him, their bland and graceful pastor, to the throne of heavenly grace. Fit leader was he of such a flock ! In the pulpit he was calm and fluent. He took care that there should be nothing in his sermons to arrest the understanding or unprofitably occupy it, addressing himself entirely to the feel-

ings and fancy of his cultivated audience, in frequently interesting and even charmingly imaginative compositions. Such a sermon I heard to-night. The text was a fearful passage of Scripture, — 2 Corinthians iv. 3: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." If any words were calculated to startle such a congregation out of their guilty and fatal apathy, were not these? Ought not the minister to have looked around him and trembled? So one would have thought; but this "dear man" knew his mission and flock better.

He presented us an elegant description of heaven, with its crystal battlements, its jasper walls, its buildings of pure gold, its foundations of precious stones, its balmy air, its sounds of mysterious melody, its overflowing fulness of everlasting happiness. And would his dear hearers be content to lose all this? Content to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Forbid it, eternal Mercy! But lest a strain like this should disturb or distress his fastidious

hearers, he took the opportunity to enforce and illustrate the consolatory truth that —

“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”

He finally sent his congregation away overflowing with Christian sympathy, very well pleased with the minister, but infinitely better pleased with themselves.

To know whether a minister, young or still in flower, is in safe or dangerous paths, there are two psychometers, a comparison of which will give infallible returns.

The first is the black broadcloth forming the knees of his pantaloons ; the second the patch of carpet before his mirror. If the first is unworn and the second frayed and threadbare, — pray for him. If the first is worn and shiny, and the second keeps its pattern and texture, — get him to pray for you.

Thoughts of these ministers and their countless imitators make one exclaim with

Romola, "God's kingdom is something wider; else let me stand outside it, with the beings I love."

These, however, are exceptions, with whom we like to contrast ourselves. Our own weakness and misdemeanors are not so apparent. We appear better and grander. But we hesitate in drawing near the procession of holy men who live lives of purity and self-denial. I wonder if it was ever easy for any one to be good? Being good, it seems to me, is as much a matter of temperament as being happy. There are people with strong capacity for enjoyment and the corresponding power for suffering; and there are people of a stolid, phlegmatic nature, feeling neither joy nor sorrow very keenly, feeling no decided inclination to be anything but good and commonplace. They do not eat their hearts out with intense anticipations, or exhaust themselves with devouring possession, but take things placidly as they come. They never feel their hearts ache with the "Weltschmerz" which Goethe tells of in

such comprehensive words, — that world-weariness for which he tried every cure, yet which cursed so large a part of his life. Some men, then, are trying one way to be good, some another, — one in a calm methodical way, with no expense of heart's blood ; while another is fighting and struggling and straining against temptations that hourly beset him.

Have we any right to condemn when we remember that the germs of all things are in the human heart ; that the greatest heroes and the greatest criminals are but different modes of ourselves ? It is probably a truer truth than most of us realize, that our own virtue is largely a matter of circumstance ; that our good conduct is the product of forces outside of ourselves ; that we are mainly the creatures of circumstance, including in that term hereditary predispositions, social environments, and all other things that influence conduct and character.

Do you remember "Old Titbottom's" magic spectacles, through which he could

read the hearts of all men, and which he sometimes regarded as a gift of the greatest value, and at times as something he had been happier never to have possessed?

I borrowed those spectacles once ; but the visions made me afraid. If I felt myself warmly drawn to any one, I struggled with the fierce desire of seeing him through the spectacles ; for I feared to find him something else than I fancied. But, sometimes mastered after long struggles, as if the unavoidable condition of owning the spectacles were using them, I would seize them, and saunter forth.

In many houses I thought to see angels, nymphs, or at least women, and found only broomsticks, mops, or kettles hurrying about, rattling and tinkling in a state of shrill activity. I made calls upon elegant ladies ; and after I had enjoyed the gloss of silk, the delicacy of laces, and the glitter of jewels, I slipped on my spectacles, and saw a peacock's feather, flounced, furbelowed, and fluttering, or an iron rod, thin, sharp, and hard ; nor could I pos-

sibly mistake the movement of the drapery for any flexibility of the thing draped. Or, mysteriously chilled, I saw a statue of perfect form or flowing movement, it might be alabaster, or bronze, or marble; but sadly often it was ice. But the true sadness was rather in seeing those who, not having the spectacles, thought that the iron rod was flexible, and the ice statue warm. I saw many a gallant heart, which seemed to me brave and loyal as the Crusaders, pursuing through a long life of devotion the hope of lighting at least a smile in the cold eyes, if not a fire in the icy heart. I watched the earnest, enthusiastic sacrifice. I saw the pure resolve, the generous faith, the fine scorn of doubt, the impatience of suspicion. I watched the grace, the ardor, the glory of devotion. Through these strange spectacles how often I saw the noblest heart renouncing all other hopes, all other ambition, all other life, than the possible love of one of these statues.

I wept until my spectacles were dimmed

for those hopeless lovers ; but there was a pang beyond tears for the icy statues. I grew old and hard, almost morose ; people seemed to me so blind and unreasonable. They did the wrong thing ; they called green yellow and black white. Young men said of a girl, "What a lovely, simple creature !" I looked through my glasses, and there was only a glistening wisp of straw, dry and hollow. Or they said, "What a cold, proud beauty !" I looked, and lo, — a Madonna, whose heart held the world. Or they said, "What a wild, giddy girl !" and I saw a glancing, dancing mountain stream, pure as the virgin snow whence it flowed, singing through sun and shade, over pearls and gold-dust, touching the flowers with a dewy kiss, — a beam of grace, a happy song, a line of light in the dim and troubled landscape. They went to see actors upon the stage. I went to see actors in the boxes, so consummately cunning that others did not know they were acting ; and they did not suspect it themselves.

But I could not grow misanthropic when I saw in the eyes of so many who were called old the gushing fountains of eternal youth and the light of an immortal dawn ; or when I saw those who were deemed unsuccessful or aimless, ruling a fair realm of peace and plenty, either in their own hearts or in others', — a realm and princely possession, for which they had well renounced a hopeless search and a belated triumph. I knew one man, who had been for years a by-word for having sought the philosopher's stone. But I looked at him with the spectacles and saw a satisfaction in concentrated energies, and a tenacity arising from a devotion to a noble dream, which was not apparent in the youths who ridiculed him, or in the clever gentlemen who cracked their jokes at his expense at a gossiping dinner.

And there is your neighbor over the way, who passes for a woman who has failed in her career because she is an old maid. People wag solemn heads of pity, and say that she made so great a mistake in not

marrying the famous or wealthy man who was for years her suitor. It is clear that no orange-flowers will bloom for her. The young people make their tender romances about her, as they watch her and think of her solitary hours of bitter regret and wasting longing, never to be satisfied. When I first knew her I shared this sympathy, and pleased my imagination with fancying her hard struggle with the conviction that she had lost all that made life beautiful. But when, one day, I raised my glasses and glanced at her, I did not see the old maid whom we all pitied for a secret sorrow, but a woman whose nature was a tropic, in which the sun shone, birds sang, and flowers bloomed forever. There were no regrets, no doubts or half-wishes, but a calm sweetness, a transparent peace. I could hear her say simply and quietly, "If I did not love him, how could I marry him?" Could one grow misanthropic in the face of such fidelity and dignity and simplicity? Great excellences lie concealed in the depths of character like pearls at the bottom of the

sea. Under the laughing, glancing surface, how little they are suspected !

Have those of us who wear not the magic spectacles continually any right to criticise or condemn? Can we tell aught of the wrong resisted? There is always a deep vein of sorrow and disappointment, of shadow and drawback, in every human life. One man wrote "*Miserrimus*" on his tomb, and there are many who would not refuse that briefest, saddest, and most significant of epitaphs. If we could only see into the inner lives of men, we should find that behind all the lightsome foreground of pleasure there looms up perpetually this background of darkness, like a thunder-cloud which rolls over the city at evening and makes the world colorless. How long will it be before we shall learn that for every wound that betrays itself to the sight by a scar, there are a thousand mutilations that cripple, each of them, one or more of our highest faculties? The Saviour frequently cautions his disciples against this hasty judgment of others, to which we are

all so much inclined, disposing lightly and flippantly of reputations which are as dear to them as ours to ourselves. What if the same easy, careless mode of judgment were turned upon us? Nothing in all the wide world of human wickedness is more selfish or cruel than this mean depreciation of our neighbors, *as if we were better than they*. In this as in all things, in word or deed, there is one rule to be followed, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," — a rule so simple and so comprehensive that all ages have pronounced it the Golden Rule, as summing up our whole duty in our relations to each other.

We have been accustomed to be told that the greatest thing in the religious world is faith. For centuries it has been the keynote of the evangelical religion. Long ago, I decided that my faith was not to be trifled with. It may be weak, and doubtless shows a great want of intellect on my part, but the only faith I have any faith in is the blind, unquestioning faith of a child, and with this faith I dare not trifle.

Students so often become sceptical from so much investigation that I have always abstained from the reading of any books that would weaken the faith I have. The religions of the East have been very alluring, with their fascinating theories, such as cycles and cycles of soul-life, ending in the attainment of all knowledge, but I have never explored them. And I have been able to preserve unquestioning faith in "God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son," a hell where bad people go, and a heaven peopled with good angels, and echo in my heart the words of Savonarola, "Be thankful, my daughter, if your own soul has been spared perplexity, and judge not those to whom a harder lot has been given."

I can never forget the impression made upon me by a clergyman, who took me into his confidence, with one of those strange confessions which are sometimes made by the most reticent to the most unlikely of listeners. A mutual friend mentioned his

name to me one day, as we stood at the hotel door together ; he merely bowed, and a moment later moved away, and I did not give him a second thought. The following afternoon, in one of my long rambles, I found myself far away from the hotel, and a sudden mountain storm came up before I could find shelter of any kind. It was not only an unpleasant, but a dangerous position, and I confess to having been a good deal frightened. As I looked helplessly about, the sight of the tall priest I had met there the day before was a very welcome one. He was at least a human being and a man, and might know of some hut where we could find temporary safety. As it happened, he did ; and for more than an hour we were together in an empty cabin on the hillside.

The storm increased, and our danger was very evident. How it came about I do not know, but the conversation turned upon fear, trust in God, and faith. Shall I ever forget the man's haggard, stricken face, as he told me his story? — told me, while

the lightning played about us in forked tongues of flame, of his simple, child-like, unquestioning belief in God and Christ and the old-fashioned devil with a cloven foot and a hell of fire and brimstone ; how he had preached plain Bible truths such as he himself had learned at his mother's knee ; how little by little doubts came, questionings arose, faith became clouded ; how the wonderful story of Christianity, which he had reverently received, and in which he had reverently instructed others, took gradually but surely the hues of a lovely fairy tale which man's intellect could only smile at, not seriously accept ; how the trouble grew greater, and books and study only made it worse, until, in order to remain an honest man, he had fled from church and people, taking his nominal holiday for a season, knowing well in his heart that it was a farewell for all time. As the storm increased, the man's excitement grew. I think he forgot I was there, and talked only to himself or the spirits he recognized in the storm shrieks. Oh, it was awful, the

great agony of a soul in doubt ! Never can I forget the unutterable horror of it, — the tortured pain, the seething agony, the writhing despair of that human soul. It was sport for devils, rare mirth for the Arch-fiend himself, bored with the puny impotence of man in fashioning evil. Rich, rare sport for the old pagan to watch a nineteenth-century conscience so saturated with intellectual culture that it had thrown old beliefs to the wind, and denied as fables God and Satan equally.

To be doubted must convulse the Power of Evil with devilish delight ; and I can fancy him evolving out of his inner consciousness a rare refinement of revenge for the presumption of this clarified intellect, even while the anguished soul told of his doubts and of the peace gone from him forever.

The storm cleared slightly, and the lightning ceased. The man before me was still looking out over the mountains with wide, unseeing eyes, unconscious that any one was near him. I hated to leave him alone

with his great agony, yet I dreaded more to have him come out of that trance-like state and remember that he had spoken such words to a stranger.

So very quietly I stole away and left him alone with his tortured soul. Are we not all

“As infants crying in the night,
As infants crying for a light,
And with no language but a cry”?

And if a glimmer of light has come to me as a glorious heritage, I shall fan it gently, lest I be left in total darkness. Wise men do not encourage the habit of criticism, the tendency of which is necessarily sceptical. In religion lies the only guidance for human life ; and a man should reflect that although observances may seem to him offensive, and stories told about the gods incredible, yet, as a rule of action, a system which has been the growth of ages is infinitely more precious than any theory he can think out for himself. He should know that his own mind, that the mind of any single individual, is unequal to so vast a matter. A man may

think as he likes about the legends of Zeus and Here, but he must keep his thoughts to himself. A man who brings into contempt the creed of his country is the deepest of criminals, and deserves death. "Let him die for it," — a remarkable expression to have been used by Plato, the wisest and gentlest of human law-givers.

A woman's need of religion seems to me much greater than a man's, not only for the next life, but for this; not only to gain heaven, but to enable her to exist until she reaches it. A man without some sort of religion is at best a poor reprobate, the foot-ball of destiny, with no tie linking him to infinity and the wondrous Eternity that is begun with him; but a woman without it is even worse, — a flame without heat, a rainbow without color, a flower without perfume. A man may in some sort tie his frail hopes and honor to business or the world; but a woman without the anchor, Faith, is adrift and a wreck.

A man may craze his thought and his brain to trustfulness in such poor harborage

as fame and reputation may stretch before him ; but a woman, where can she put her hope in storms, if not in Heaven ?

And that trust, that abiding love, that enduring hope mellowing every page and scene of life, lighting them with pleasant radiance when the world-storms break, what can bestow it all but a holy soul-tie to what is above the storms ? Who that has enjoyed the counsel and love of a Christian mother but will echo the thought with energy and hallow it with a tear ?

A vision comes to me of my mother as she sat one Sunday afternoon. One hand is softly stroking the hair from my forehead, the other turning the leaves of a book as she reads in her low sweet voice the words of Thomas à Kempis. It was years ago ; but I hear the words now, embracing, as they do, the whole world of self-denial, the spirit of self-sacrifice. I have never comprehended them, but once comprehended, it seems to me they would prove the essence, the soul of Christianity : —

“ Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou

shalt enjoy much inward peace. Then shall all vain imaginations, evil perturbations, and superfluous cares fly away, then shall immoderate fear leave thee, inordinate love shall die."

It was a little, old-fashioned book, but it works miracles to-day, while sermons and treatises newly issued leave things as they were, or worse than before. It was written by a hand that waited for the heart's prompting ; it is the chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish, struggle, trust, and triumph, not written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. And it will remain to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations, — the voice of a brother who years ago felt and suffered and renounced, in the cloister, perhaps, with serge gown and tonsured head, with chanting and long fasts, and in a fashion of speech different from ours, but under the same silent far-off heavens and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness.

Lately, I have heard women arraigned in a most startling manner for their want of charity, of thoughtfulness, of loving-kindness. Having come into the arena, men no longer consider it necessary to "handle them with gloves," but boldly criticise and condemn.

In the table of contents of a well-known magazine, my eye caught the title, "The Mannerless Sex." The writer scathingly denounced the code of manners followed in public by the so-called "gentle sex" as disgracefully inconsiderate, superlatively selfish, and exasperatingly insolent. He railed of their manner in a horse-car. He ruthlessly condemned the inconsiderate woman in a sleeping-car, who arises while it is yet night, and, secreting herself in the dressing-room, locks the door against all other women, and refuses to be dislodged by threats or prayers. But it is when lovely woman goes a-shopping she receives the most severe criticism. He said, in fact, that she does very little that she ought to

do, and very, very much that she ought not to do.

Who has not suffered from the waspish tongue of an inconsiderate woman? For how much misery must it answer? The wounded pride, the lacerated feelings, the tarnished reputations she leaves in her wake! A few hasty, careless words, a brutal attack, a refined stab, as the case may be, and some one's life is not the same. Thank God, there are few such women! But rare as they are, they have the power to reflect sadly and endlessly upon the world of womankind. If each woman could only realize her own power for the weal or woe of the world! Each woman is a queen. Consciously or not, she is in many a heart enthroned. Queens they must ever be, — queens to their lovers, queens to their husbands and sons, queens of higher mystery to the world beyond, which bows itself and will forever bow before the myrtle crown and stainless sceptre of womanhood.

A most universal and most unlovely trait

in woman's character is the little sympathy they have for each other in weakness or sin. Can it be true there is a savage instinct of cruelty innate in women, not only the lack of the partisanship of the sex, but a real distrust and disbelief in each other, a feline wish to rend and tear? Who does not remember the scene in "The Scarlet Letter" where Hester Prynne, led forth to her ignominious punishment, finds her worst tortures in the grim, upright, and unfeeling Puritan dames, who treated her to cold, un pitying glances and jeers?

The same spirit modified has exhibited itself in each succeeding age, and one sadly recalls that throughout history women have been tenfold more pitiless and unrelenting to women than have men. Yet women daily pray to be delivered from "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness," and possess in the highest degree the religion of the ermines and of refinement, the horror of a speck or stain. The one thing, it seems to me, that a woman owes to the world, to herself, and to her Maker,

is reverence for her own sex. Pay homage to womankind, adorn it, place sacrifices upon its altars, rejoice in unceasing service to it, for surely there is nothing more beautiful, more holy, than womanliness.

There is a courtesy of the heart: it is akin to love, and out of it arises the purest courtesy in the outward behavior.

And is it not by Love we expect to be saved?—Love, which is the high-priest of the world, the revealer of Immortality, the fire of the altar, and without whose ray we could not even dimly comprehend Eternity.

Saint Paul says, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not Love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." Christ himself says that Love is a fulfilling of the law. Love suffereth long, and is kind. Love envieth not. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh no account of evil.

And the final test will be not religious-

ness, but Love: not what we have done, not what we have believed, not what we have achieved, but how we have loved, according to the number of cups of cold water we have given in the name of Christ.

AFTER A WEDDING.

AFTER A WEDDING.

“That which issues from the heart alone
Will bend the hearts of others to your own.”

“**D**EARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony.”

A hush has fallen upon the expectant multitude. The bride has come ; and every eye is turned upon her as, with her beauty shadowed in white veils, she stands with her court, with her blushes and smiles, the glisten of her white robes, the glimmer of her lace, the prominent feature of a lovely pageant.

“For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, till death us do part !” How few of us realize the solemnity, the sweet awfulness of the scene !

Does the young bride among her cloud of maidens realize it herself? Are her thoughts with the great mystery that is about to absorb her life into another's, or do the weighty matters of her paraphernalia, of her wedding gifts, her train, the church processional, exclude perception of the way into that new sphere just closing around her, in which she shall walk to all outside view the same, but in reality another being? Let us hope that she at least, of all this vast throng, understands something of the great miracle. It can only be, then, with the reverence due to some mystery of old, where one draws near to the holy of holies, that the bride approaches the altar, — an altar that burns to heaven with the white flame of all pure love and devotion, or an altar on which is to be offered the mournful sacrifice of broken hearts and lives. Full often the consciousness of this betrays itself by the trembling tones in the voice that invokes invisible powers to witness the bridal, and the realization of it is so appalling that all

the nervous strength is summoned to carry off the hour triumphantly, and hide emotion from the curious crowd that custom calls to witness the solemn acts of our lives, the bridal and funeral rites, the two moments when feeling is most intense, and should be most sacred and unseen.

The bride was wondrous fair to-night, and we can only hope that the tremor of her voice, the earnest look in her lovely eyes, evinced that in her soul there was an altar where sacrificial fire is ever burning, that she whispered as an oath, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death, and jealousy as cruel as the grave." Of all passions that can take possession of the heart or brain, jealousy is the worst. For many generations the chemists sought for the secret by which all metals could be changed to gold, and through which the basest could become the best. Jealousy seeks exactly the opposite. It endeavors to transmute the very gold of love into the dross of shame and crime. Does she know

this, and swear self-abnegation? Does she give thanks for the strength and fire and tenderness in him,—thanks that so great a fate has been given her, as entering into the circle of his days? Does she feel that neither teasing trouble nor want, nor pain, nor weariness, sharp thrusts nor heavy blows, shall signify to her; that she will defy death and fate itself, and love shall be eternal?

If one desires to investigate how the groom thinks and feels, while passing through such an ordeal, I refer him to Rudyard Kipling's "Story of the Gadsbys," in which he pictures in detail Captain Gadsby's misery from the moment when his friend begged him "for the Honor of the Regiment, stand up" to the time when, having been Mendelssohned out of church to the paternal roof, they are enduring the usual tortures over the wedding-cake.

Ah, what a prize a man gets who wins a bride so beautiful! How the men envy him who come to the wedding and see her hanging on his arm, in all her wealth of

tulle and orange blossoms. The dear, young, round, soft thing ! Her heart must be just as soft, her temper just as free from angles, her character just as pliant. If anything ever goes wrong there, it must be the husband's fault ; he can make her what he likes, that is plain. And the lover himself thinks so, too ; the little darling is so fond of him, her little vanities are so bewitching, he wouldn't consent to her being a bit wiser for the world. Every man under such circumstances is conscious of being a great physiognomist. Nature has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin, in those eyelids delicate as petals, in the dark liquid depths of those wonderful eyes. How she will dote on her children ! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang around her like the flowerets round the central flower, and the husband will look on smiling benignly, able whenever he chooses to withdraw into the sanctuary of his wisdom, toward which his sweet wife

will look reverently and never lift the curtain. It is a marriage such as they made in the Golden Age, when the men were all wise and majestic, the women all lovely and loving. Of course it is extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to fall in love with a girl who has nothing more than her beauty to recommend her. I know that, as a rule, sensible men fall in love with the most sensible women of their acquaintance, see through all the petty deceits of coquettish vanity, never imagine themselves loved when they are not loved, cease loving on all proper occasions, and marry the woman most fitted for them in every respect indeed, so as to compel the approbation of all the maiden ladies in the neighborhood. But in so complex a thing as human nature we must consider that it is hard to find rules without exceptions.

It occurs to me that as people when they marry virtually renounce other companionship and friends, they might perhaps do wisely before the knot is tied to ascertain whether the intellectual dowry of the

other is sufficient for the demands that will be made upon it for sympathy and entertainment. Men choose their wives because they are pretty, or because they are rich, or because they are well connected, but rarely for the permanent interest of their society.

Yet who that has ever been compelled to the dreadful misfortune of a tête-à-tête with an uncompanionable person could reflect without apprehension upon a lifetime of such tête-à-têtes?

What is the use of having any mental superiority, if in a matter so enormously important as the choice of a companion for life it fails to give warning when the choice is absurdly unsuitable? Have you never noticed, though, that gifted women are most apt to throw themselves away on men entirely unworthy of them, led captive by their own ideals, making gods of stocks and stones? When men complain, as they do not infrequently, that their wives have no ideas, the question inevitably suggests itself to me, why the superiority of the

masculine intellect did not permit it to discern the defect in time. If they are so clever as to be bored by ordinary women, why were they unable to find the feminine cleverness that would respond to it? The world, from past experience, does not expect a man of genius to marry rightly, and half includes a blunder in matrimony among the evidences of genius.

Of all men who ever lived Shelley was, perhaps, the best representative of genius pure and simple, possessing it in the highest degree. Those who read of Shelley and his marriage somehow feel that it was in him to make precisely the blunder which, without indorsing the modern libels on Harriet Westbrook, one feels assured that he did make. And what profound disappointment, what failure, what dismay, comes to the mind with the name of Mary Shelley! All that is highest and best in mental aspiration, all that is lowest and most disappointing in actual experience. If any two people could have been joined together other than God's Word doth allow, and

have lived honorably in the eyes of men and before the tribunal of their own hearts, one would say it would have been the pure spirit of Mary Godwin and the unworldly soul of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Intellectual companionship, a true affection, freedom from the trammels of worldliness, might have secured them an ideal union for all time. But what does one see? The first sorrow comes, the death of the little child at Rome, and then the sweet bells jangle, dissatisfaction, weariness, the sundering of real companionship, a noxious social atmosphere, probable infidelity, and the end. However, observers may experience any emotion at the blunders of genius,—indignation, regret, scorn, or even a certain pleasure at finding the demigods so like men,—but they are never surprised. But genius is incomprehensible; all we know of it is, that it is neither a cause nor a consequence of the possession of judgment. . . . But why able, sensible, practical men make such blunders is a source of constant amazement. The common notion that they

are carried away by passion may be true sometimes ; but that does not explain why passion — men's field of choice being so wide — does not fix itself upon the right person.

Some say it may be all summed up in the one word "attraction." Is it not odd, then, that the gifted in selecting the one friend from the world commit such fatal errors, yet in choosing their other friends display rare judgment?

I frequently see a woman married to the man of all others the least suited to her, yet gather a circle of friends around her, whose excellence and charm does but increase her trouble by rendering it more conscious ; and men do the same thing, though it is less perceived.

There must be something that clouds the judgment, and that something, I fancy, is one of two things, — either unreasoning, almost preposterous self-confidence, which makes a man quite sure that if a woman impresses him pleasantly he must therefore understand her ; and the other is the action

of caprice, that mental impulse which is independent of reason, and which in both sexes seems to operate more strongly in choosing a companion for life than on any other occasion. A man who likes a woman and a woman who is in love with a man always believe that each knows all about the other, resent advice from the outside, and will not even consider circumstantial evidence, patent to all but themselves. There is an inner vanity in men and women as to their own judgment, and when a helpmate is to be chosen, it seems to wake in irresistible strength.

Marriage is still an unsettled problem. The Eastern poets sing woman a slave ; the Western, man enslaved by her. But far-sighted spirits, like Dante, reject both views, and sing Ideal Love, — a thought too precious for humanity to let it escape when once it reaches human consciousness. Yet it is philosophers and moralists whom Time leads to accept it ; while the poets, its first leaders, ignore the truth that marriage involves human dignity, responsibility, community, and mutual trust.

To making this truth clear, the "Woman's Poet" has devoted his poet's gift; and no sooner does he do so than we see how little woman's voice has been heard in other poetry; and we can but feel thankful that a singer, who can make himself gladly heard, is singing of freedom, openness, pure and conscious devotion, conscience responsible to itself alike in man and woman.

On his plain but trusty sword are these words only, — Love and Understand. The union between two people is only true, according as they love and understand each other in thought, feeling, and will, and are consequently able to fight life's battles, bear its pains, and enjoy its glory together, and this by having directed forward and freed each other's development.

How often, when all is falling to pieces, do two people by a sudden flash see how they have been gradually bringing their fate on themselves, so that it destroys all the edifice of their past life, — the man by not having considered the woman's personality;

the woman, by having loved a person who does not exist.

An eminent historian, now a dignitary of the Church of England, was once asked, "What is the moral attitude of men toward women?" After a few moments' consideration, with a humorous twinkle of his eye, came the unexpected reply, "They have none." Is it not true? Men have no really definite standard by which they regulate their conduct toward women, such as they have in their dealings with their fellow-men. A lie told to a woman is hardly a moral offence. A promise made to a woman is only optionally binding. The moment a man finds or feels there is a woman in the case, his moral sense of fairness and justice seems to desert him. If she be young and fair, he places her on a pedestal and worships her like a goddess, doing her behest for right or wrong. After a while he wearies of his worship, and rudely shakes the frail pedestal of his goddess. Down comes his idol, and falls to pieces before his eyes.

Then the quondam worshipper scornfully exclaims, "Why did n't she live up to my ideal? She's only a woman after all;" and the fallen idol gets afterwards less than justice. It is not priests or pessimists who advance this idea; but keen-sighted observers of the every-day lives of men and women are of the opinion that, if the stern hand of law were relaxed, no sense of honor or justice would bind men to women after the outward sensual attraction was gone or diminished. Sadly often they are correct in believing that honor and justice seldom enter into account in connection with a woman; and in the lives of most women it is only credulity, the continued trust in man, which is the alternative of despair. This is due, in a measure, to that hateful view of life which most men hold, that reduces woman to a mere thing, — the dearest thing, perhaps, in all the world, but not a human being, not his peer. They believe they really love their wives, and at the same time think they can be Will and Conscience for them. It

is a view that makes it possible for a woman to call these habits of thought in men chivalry, and exercise every quality of her inner and outward being only to secure the small triumphs of an odalisque. Yet can she believe herself a pure-hearted woman,—believe that she loves; believe that she really lives?

There may be degrees of conjugal felicity, satisfactory in their way, without intellectual intercourse; and yet I cannot think any one of high culture could regard his or her marriage as altogether a successful one so long as either is shut out from the mental life of the other. No love is likely to last that is not based on intellectual sympathy. When the mind is interested and contented, it does not tire half as fast as the eyes or the passions. In any very great love there is at the commencement a delightful sense of meeting something long sought, some supplement of ourselves long desired in vain. When this pleasure is based on the charm of some mind wholly akin to our own, and filled for us with ever-

renewing well-springs of the intellect, there is really hardly any reason why this mutual delight should ever change. I have often wondered if it were possible that two people should live together, and talk to each other every day for twenty years, without knowing each other's views too well for them to seem worth expressing or worth listening to. There are friends whom we know too well, so that our talk with them has less of refreshment and entertainment than a conversation with any intelligent stranger. There seems to me danger of this in marriage, which may become dull, not because the mental force of either has declined, but because each has come to know so accurately beforehand what the other will say on any given topic that inquiry is felt to be useless. To keep herself, then, from growing uninteresting, a woman should take as much trouble at least to renew her mind by fresh knowledge and new thoughts as an author is compelled to do for the unknown multitude of his readers.

Women have so much less egotism, so much more adaptability than men, that, if they will only make the effort, they can easily retain their ascendancy over their husbands, and keep up the interest in their lives.

In an exceedingly clever novel of recent publication, called "*A Successful Man*," there is a hint of one of the perpetually recurring tragedies of modern life. The matter is one which, by common consent, we do not talk much about; which in each individual case we do our best to ignore; but which all must recognize as the source of much unhappiness, much bitterness of spirit. A man marries a woman. They sincerely love each other, and are apparently satisfying, each to each. The man becomes engrossed in affairs; the woman in domesticity and fashionable life, or in whatever else of feminine occupation her tastes and circumstances may suggest. Struggle is good for the man. Contact with men, the constant attrition of mind, the strenuous contests of life,—these things bring

growth to him. The years slip by ; and he finds himself larger, — intellectually developed out of himself into a new and higher manhood. The wife, meanwhile, has been standing still, in all sweetness and purity ; but she has not grown. She is the same woman she was at the wedding time, only a few years older. She has been loyal to her duties. She has brought up her children well. She has done her best to make her house a home, as she understands the word ; namely, a place of entire comfort. But she has lost the capacity to share her husband's thoughts and aspirations. She has not grown with him in intellectual stature, has not acquired his enlarged tastes, has not fitted herself to be still his most valued companion, counsellor, and friend. He must seek companionship of that kind elsewhere, — in his club, in society, or as a last resort he must find a substitute for companionship by complete absorption in his pursuits.

In the novel, which suggests all this, he finds his solace in the love of another

woman ; but that is not necessary to the completeness of the tragedy. The tragedy comes when the woman recognizes her lack of capacity to share the thoughts, and be the companion, of the man whose help-mate she set out to be. There is no remedy after that ; and the tenderest, loyal-est devotion on the part of the man can accomplish nothing of repair. The woman knows that through her lack, even though it be not through her fault, the marriage has failed of being what it was meant to be ; and if she be sensitive, and the man sympathetic, the very affection that remains to both adds to the distress of the situation. The old notion of woman as a domestic animal, a petted slave, a soft unthinking minister to man's comfort, has been put aside. Is not two thirds of the misery of ill-mated couples dated from the decline of interest of the husband in the wife, when her beauty begins to fade, and she has nothing deeper to charm him ? — that peerless beauty which won for her the intoxicating admiration of himself

and others, the admiration which, suffered to-day, becomes necessary to her happiness to-morrow.

It is chiefly for admiration that women have been educated, and for which they continue to live. To present a pleasing exterior, to have a graceful carriage, to make themselves entertaining in society, — these, for generations, have been considered the only requisites of a woman's education. She must excite admiration ; or else, in common parlance, the object of her destiny — marriage — may never be attained. It has been considered a matter of comparatively little importance whether she possesses deeper and more fascinating qualities. There is one quality, without which all the fascinations and acquirements of women are futile. Beauty, grace, wit, erudition, are in vain without that indescribable something we call personal magnetism, — a mysterious influence which never has been dissected by science. Its source is unknown, its extent unlimited ; but it is the strongest weapon a woman can

wield. Some women have an eloquence in their whole persons, which touches and sets vibrating chords lying wrapped away in the veriest secret recesses of the heart. Women, it is said, are *bourgeoise* in their judgments of each other. They cannot understand. They think that beauty or wit will master men. Ah, no; the mystery lies deeper. Many completely beautiful women are entirely without this charm; and many plain women have possessed it to such a degree that noted beauties have been unable to contend against them in personal influence. Princess Metternich, one of the most indisputably ugly women of the century, was one of the most charming. Does any one imagine that Helen of Troy, past forty, and Cleopatra, past thirty, could have changed the face of the world on the strength of beauty alone, had they not had this mysterious, unexplainable gift besides? Women as beautiful have perhaps been born into the world many times; but they had not the sorceress' talisman of charm possessed by them. Plutarch says of the

peerless Cleopatra that her actual beauty was not so extraordinary or incomparable that every one was struck by it ; but her presence and effluence were irresistible. She conquered the world's conqueror ; and this alone denotes her immeasurable fascination. She was fashioned grand as the spirit of storm, lovely as lightning, cruel as pestilence, — yet with a heart. This charm — the *gewisses etwas* — has always seemed to me to spring from a heart full of feeling, whether overflowing or concentrated and stifled. However, this power, which dominates and fascinates, is as rare in human beings as the sentiment which it inspires. Fortunately, Providence requires no such raging torrents to turn the wheels of life. The quiet tides of the instinct of mating are enough.

The French, in speaking of a charming woman, say she has a cultivated intellect and a cultivated heart. “A cultivated heart,” — how little attention we pay to that organ in comparison to the time and care expended upon the intellect ! People

of this day are altogether too much afraid of the power of "emotion" in a woman. They think it means hysterics, and at once proceed to throw cold water over it. These are they who are unable to perceive the difference between sentimentality and sentiment, which is only the power of feeling deeply. It is not the cold, practical, purely intellectual women, but the women capable of feeling, who are the most attractive to men, and retain their influence longest. The ideal woman is as soft as she is strong. And we cannot but long for greater quantity of the capacity for generous enthusiasm, the capacity for warm love, the capacity for romantic devotion. The power of rich and delicate emotion is what discloses a woman's sympathies, gives variety and color to her whole nature; and to her manner gives delicate tact and fine intuitions.

A cynic has written that the hearts of men are like grates in inns where the wood is laid ready for kindling; and the smile of any pretty woman is enough to set it in a

blaze. If this be true, it can be readily seen that there is no safety in the intrinsic charms which call forth only admiration ; and the only foundation for genuine and enduring love is the inner spirit and mental furnishing, which are independent of the vicissitudes of fortune, and which can hold forever the wavering fealty of any but the most shallow and wicked man. It is, perhaps, this lack of inherent and substantial charm that has given beauty its immemorial association with misery, and caused the poet to sing so sweetly of "beauty and anguish walking hand in hand." Beauty is generally too content to be beautiful, and misled by the intoxication of flattery, has taken little pains to secure the plainer gifts which remain after the gilding has worn away. It has mistaken admiration for love ; and the mere loss of their accustomed incense has often been enough to embitter the souls of men and women. Fame is only a large form of admiration. All young and ardent souls think longingly of fame, and are seldom discouraged by the

universal testimony of the great, that fame is very barren after all.

Great women especially have borne witness to the unsatisfactory nature of fame. Is this because of the traditions of the character of women? Or, is there a stronger inherent longing in them than in men for love and loyalty?

“Fame indeed, ’t was said,
Means simply love. It was a man said that,
And then there’s love and love ; the love of all,
Is but a small thing to the love of one.”

And women, on the whole, have made rather poor work of it when they have set out to get admiration, and ignore love. With few exceptions (and they have not, perhaps, encountered the temptations which beset many of their sisters), they have ignominiously succumbed before Cupid, kissing in abject submission the very arrow that has slain their ambition, content as long as he brings to them the single-hearted devotion of one man.

Perhaps woman will never overcome this

tenderness of heart ; perhaps she will ever stand ready to give up the most brilliant career for love, happy to let the silver flame of her genius illumine the heart and lessen the loneliness of the one man she loves. A single life, though enlivened by many duties and pleasures, is lonely at times — beneath the deafness of space and the silence of the stars. But give him one friend who can understand him, who will be accessible day or night, one friend, one kindly listener, — just one, — and the universe is changed. It is deaf and indifferent no longer ; and while she listens, it seems that all men and angels listened also, so perfectly his thought is mirrored in the light of her answering eyes. The altar of your confidence is there ; the end of your worldly faith is there, and adorning it all and sending your blood in passionate flow, is the ecstasy of the conviction that there, at least, you are beloved ; there you are understood ; there your errors will meet ever with gentlest forgiveness ; there your troubles will be smiled away ; there you

may unburden your soul, fearless of harsh, unsympathizing ears; there you may be entirely and joyfully yourself. If the deep diapason of gloom rolls out from your soul, she will not answer it with a wanton jig, but rather with a touching plaint that shall yet have a hint of hope in its soft strains.

All the conditions of marriage may be summed up in the one word, Love. But Love, the chief musician of the world, must find an instrument worthy of his touch, before he can show all his power and make heart and soul ring with the lofty strains of a sublime passion. Not every one knows what love means; few, indeed, know all that love can mean. But, at present, love is an idea to which no clear meaning attaches. Love presumes youth, as a rule; but it is not the same thing as youth, or even as youth with warm and mutual liking into the bargain. Youth is a glorious thing; but it has its own dangers, and the chief of these is self-deception. Love is confidence, mutual understanding. With this love, marriage will prove no fail-

ure, but the highest and most permanent of earthly relationships.

And two lives intertwined with mutual hopes and joys and sorrows will find love glorified and intensified, will find that the deep fulness of perfected love is as much dearer than its dawning dreams as the flower in perfect beauty is lovelier than the opening bud, or the hope fulfilled is better than the first faint, half-formed wish. What strength is given by this love and boundless trust between two human beings ! It places in one's heart a little fortress, which outside influences assail in vain, which is securely stored with faith and confidence as ammunition, assured affection as provisions ; and no siege can weaken, no attack prove dangerous.

Wherever love is, it is pure, and there has been no time in the world's history when its light has been extinguished. In all ages, in all climes, among all people, there has been true, pure, and unselfish love, and everywhere at all times the ceremony of marriage testifies to that which has

happened within the temple of the human heart. A true marriage is a mutual concord and agreement of souls, — a harmony in which discord is not even imagined ; it is the uniting of two mornings that hope to reach the night together.

Each has found his ideal : the man has found the one woman of all the world, the impersonation of affection, purity, love, beauty, and grace ; and the woman has found the one man of all the world, — her ideal, — and all that she knows of romance, of art, of courage, of heroism, of honesty, is realized in him.

Within this radiant enclosure of conjugal relations and communion, we become sure of ourselves and our companions. The disguises which the world and society force us to wear, the various deceptions we practise in self-defence, are all laid aside when we come into the presence of that dear companion to whom we have given our heart, and from whom we have nothing to hide. When love opens the door of the heart and abandons the vigilance and defence born of

suspicion and fear, we can revel in joyous confidence, and can lift the veil that has hitherto screened the secrets of our life.

When two hearts throb with a common joy and hope, when two lives blend as meeting streams, and flow on as one forever, storms may smite and sorrows startle, but God gave to love a potent charm, by which the storm is stilled, the stings removed from sorrow's poisoned fangs.

Is it the consciousness of all these glorious or gloomy possibilities that gives to a married woman that unmistakable air of confidence, an exaggerated notion of the value added to her opinions by the act of marriage? You can see it in her air the moment she walks away from the altar, keeping step to the wedding march.

This assumption of superiority is perhaps the hardest thing for those who still linger in single blessedness to bear from their self-congratulating sisters.

I wonder how many people in my acquaintance could claim the "Dunmow Flitch," of which Coleridge writes, — a relic

of a Middle Age jest, perpetrated by the monks of Dunmow Priory, in the east of England.

They assumed that it was practically impossible for married people to live in harmony, and, to prove their assumption, caused it to be known that if, after a twelve-month of married life, any couple could make affidavit that they had not quarrelled, had not regretted their marriage, and if they could live their lives over again would do just as they had done, they would receive a present of a flitch of bacon, be placed in chairs of honor, and have their names inscribed on the Monastery roll. In three hundred years it was granted only three times. Though numerous applications were made, the juries of men and women, one half married, and the remainder bachelors and spinsters, on examining the claims decided that they were not entitled to the honor.

Marriage in its widest sense, the common work of man and woman, is the question of all questions, — the question that involves

the final untying of every knot of difficulty, and determines whether or not we are to realize the idea of our race. But notwithstanding all our science, all our analysis of the tender passion, all our wise jabber about the failure of marriage, love and marriage are still personal questions, and are not to be reasoned about or in any way disposed of except in the same old way. They are subjects of which no one can have more than an infinitesimally small atom of knowledge. Each one may know how his or her marriage has turned out ; but that, in comparison with a knowledge of marriage generally, is like a single plant in comparison with the flora of the globe. The utmost experience on the subject to be found in this country extends to about three trials or experiments. A man may become twice a widower and then marry a third time ; but it may be easily shown that the variety of his feeling is more than counterbalanced by its incompleteness in each instance, for the experiments, to be conclusive, should extend at least over half a lifetime.

The subject of marriage generally is one of which men know less than they know of any other subject of universal interest. People are nearly always wrong in their estimates of the marriages of others; and the best proofs how little we know of the real tastes and needs of those with whom we are the most intimate is our unfailing surprise at the marriages they make. The judgment of the lady who said of her friends, that she had given up attempting to understand why anybody married anybody else, is the judgment of all mankind in all grades, where free choice is allowed at all. Every one knows there is not a circle of any size where there is not at least one couple whose marriage was pronounced unintelligible, or one in which the perplexity was not occasionally deepened by obvious ability either in wife or husband. What did he see in "her," or she in "him," is sure to be one of the criticisms, and the one to which there is rarely a reply. Sometimes, I admit, it is a stupid criticism, due to that impenetrable veil which hides us

from each other, and which is intended, perhaps, to deepen the individual sense of responsibility ; but very often it is true as a criticism on appearance or peculiarities of mind and manner. We will judge things from our own little peak of observation, forgetting there are always souls vibrating to tunes we consider foolish. Yet we do not hear that Memnon's statue gave forth its melody at all under the rushing of the mightiest wind, or in response to any other influence, divine or human, than certain short-lived sunbeams of morning. And we must learn to accommodate ourselves to the discovery, that some of those cunningly fashioned instruments called human souls have only a very limited range of music, and will not vibrate in the least under a touch that fills us with tremulous rapture or quivering agony.

Our ignorance of marriage is all the darker, that few men tell us the little they know, that little being too closely bound up within that innermost privacy of life which every one of right feeling respects ;

for the one who lifts up the veil of married life profanes it from a sanctuary to a vulgar place.

The only instances made bare to the public view are the unhappy marriages, which are really no marriages at all. An unhappy alliance bears the same relation to a true marriage that disease does to health ; and the quarrels and the misery of it are the crises by which nature tries to bring about either the recovery of happiness or the endurable peace of a separation.

How to be happy, though married, is a matter of vast importance to the world ; but being still a "looker-on in Vienna," I am forced to deal only in theories.

I wonder if this is not the best way, to leave a too close adherence to facts, and study marriage as it appears in hope and not in history ; for each woman sees her own life defaced and disfigured, as the life of others is not, to her imagination. Each woman sees over her own experience a certain stain of error, while that of others looks fair and ideal. Everything seen from the

point of the intellect, or as truth, is beautiful. But all is sour if seen as experience. Details are melancholy, though the plan is seemly and noble. What a charming picture Disraeli draws of his own married life in one of his novels: "The lot most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common, to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy, to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils, make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness, — to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life, the lot the most divine of divine gifts, so perfect that power and fame can never rival its delights."

As I sit here to-night, I, too, can weave a future, the whole piece of which will bear fair proportions and perfect figures, like

those tapestries on which men work by inches, and finish with their lives ; or like those grand frescos which poet-artists have wrought on the vaults of old cathedrals, — grand and colossal, appearing mere daubs of carmine and azure, as they lay upon their backs working out a hand's breadth at a time, but when complete showing symmetrical and glorious.

Is not my position, then, an enviable one? Round it do not all the Muses chant, as I dream that there is no more beautiful thing than the joining together of two souls for life, to strengthen each other in all peril, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?

AFTER ONE SUMMER.

AFTER ONE SUMMER.

“The angels call it the bliss of heaven,
The devils call it hell’s torments even,
And mortals, they call it Loving.”

IT is a dull, dreary day, — a day when old regrets and joys deeply buried from human eyes call from their graves with shrill voices, that sear the reason and stun the will. It is a day of pitiless introspection, when wrongs done, kind words unspoken, love estranged, enmities unforgiven rise up to confront the soul, — a day in which only minor chords are sounded, whose sad and wondrous melodies search the subtlest windings of the heart. It is the month of melancholy days, which brings an end to all the change and rapid pleasures of the radiant summer; the year has passed its fevered solstice, and subdued the bold and passion-hued emotions.

It is the month for reflection, — the month that raises ghostly memories that are always with us, and always will be while the sad old world keeps echoing to the sob of long good-byes, while the cruel ships sail away across the great sea, and the cold green earth lies heavy on the hearts that we have loved.

But why waste the strength of that illuminous point, which we call the present, in vain repinings for the “might have been”? No regret or remorse can undo the past. The record of each act is written, sealed, and closed forever. Is not forgetting, then, a far higher art, a vastly better thing than memory?

I have no wish to remember everything. There are many things in most lives that had better be forgotten. There is that time many years ago, when we did not act quite as justly, quite as honorably, as we should have done; that unfortunate deviation from the path of strict rectitude we once committed, that act of folly, of meanness, of wrong. Ah, well, we paid the penalty, suf-

fered the maddening hours of vain remorse, the hot agony of shame, the scorn, perhaps, of those we loved. Oh, Father Time, lift with your kindly hand those bitter memories from off our overburdened hearts, for griefs are ever coming to us with the coming hours, and our little strength is only as the day.

Not that our past should be buried. It is but the poisonous weeds, not the flowers, we should root out from the garden of Mnemosynë. Do you remember Dickens's "Haunted Man," how he prayed for forgetfulness, and when his prayer was answered he prayed for memory once more? We do not want all the ghosts laid. It is only the reproachful, cruel-eyed spectres that we flee from. Let the gentle, kindly phantoms haunt us as they will. The world grows very full of ghosts as we grow older. We need not seek in dismal churchyards, nor sleep in moated granges, to see their shadowy faces and hear the rustling of their garments in the night. Every house, every room, every creaking chair, has its own

particular ghost. They haunt the empty chambers of our lives ; they throng around us like dead leaves, whirled in the autumn wind. Some are living ; some are dead. We clasped their hands once, loved them, quarrelled with them, laughed with them, told them our thoughts and hopes and aims as they told us theirs, till it seemed our very hearts had joined in a grip that would defy the puny power of Death. They are gone, now ; lost to us forever. Their eyes will never look into ours again, and their voices we shall never hear. Only their ghosts come and talk to us. We see them, dim and shadowy through our tears. We stretch our yearning hands to them, but they are air. Like a haunted house, the walls of memory are ever echoing to unseen feet. Through the broken casements, we watch the fleeting shadows of the dead, and the saddest shadows of them all are the shadows of our own dead selves.

An old philosopher claims that if one concentrates reflection too much on one's self, one ends by seeing only what one

wishes ; but it is not so, for if we answer honestly the questions conscience puts to us, those answers must necessarily prove how we have used the limitless freedom granted us as individual free agents. The choice between good and evil, which has been our own willing choice, assumes an appalling responsibility ; and one grows frightened and dissatisfied as he realizes how far he has wandered from that ideal, the attainment of which has been so ardently desired. It is good for every man and woman to have an ideal of life, if it is never realized. It is their prerogative to fix the end of their existence and strive toward it. If that end is power or fame or wealth, it is the craving of vanity ; if it is simply pleasure, it is the inspiration of selfishness. Whatever it is, it affects character and determines destiny.

And there is this to be said of ideals of nobler sort : they cannot lead to disappointment while they are cherished for their own sake. The artist may fail to paint as he would, the poet's touch may miss the

magic string, the scientist may die before his work is completed, the patriot may live to see his country defeated and oppressed ; but ideal beauty, truth, and goodness are stars that shine forever above the storms and wrecks of time.

These quiet intervals like anniversaries remind one of so many undertakings left unfinished, so many good resolutions broken. They define too clearly the widening gaps in life never to be filled, the circle of friends narrowing with such pitiless speed and certainty.

Among the ghosts that haunt me to-day is that of a friend, who, pursuing the even tenor of his way through life, is yet dead to me. 'Twas only a misunderstanding ! How many there are who can trace back broken friendships and severed lives to that one thing, — “only a misunderstanding.”

The tenderest relations are often the most delicate and subtle ; and trifles light as air may scatter and utterly destroy the sensitive gossamer threads extending between one heart and another, as easily as

a child's passing foot destroys the spider's web woven on the dewy grass in the early morning.

"Only a misunderstanding!" How simple the words are to write! How unutterable is the depth of their meaning, the infinity of the loss they represent! And I had trusted him as holy men trust God. Ah, friend, how could you write me such words, or how, once written, could you have the heart to send them to me, weighted as they were with the demons of doubt and mistrust, with harshness, suspicion, and coldness?

It was a dangerous experiment, that friendship with pen and ink and paper.

Ten thousand deviltries may lie unsuspected along the hastily scribbled words or carefully thought-out phrases, destined to play unutterable havoc when the seal shall be broken.

A letter, what thing on earth more dangerous to confide in? A letter is flippant if it reaches you in a serious mood, or dull if you are filled with life. Written at

blood-heat, it may reach its destination when the recipient's mental thermometer counts zero ; and the burning words and thrilling sentences may turn to ice and be congealed as they are read. Or, penned in irritation and anger, they may turn a melting mood to gall, and raise evil spirits which all future efforts may be powerless to exorcise. A letter is the most uncertain thing in a world of uncertainties, the best or the worst thing devised by mortals.

With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. With one drop of ink from the pen of a friend for a mirror, I saw the beautiful structure of friendship crumble and fade, learned that friendship was but a name, found that the world had changed since men thought it good to love, natural to trust, wise to believe.

Perfect loyalty and faith from one's friends would make existence too ideal ; and to quote Emerson, friendship, like immortality of the soul, is too good to be

believed in. Our friendships hurry to short and poor conclusions, because we have made them of a texture of dreams instead of the enduring fibre of the human heart. The laws of friendship should be austere and eternal, of one web with the laws of nature and of morals. All friendship, in fact all association, must be a compromise, and each has to descend to meet the other ; for we are armed all over with subtle antagonisms, which, as soon as we meet, begin to play and soon translate all poetry to stale prose.

Real friendship should not be glass threads or frost-work, but the most solid thing we know. We should be able to approach our friend with audacious trust in the truth of his heart, in the breadth, not to be overturned, of his foundations. Friendship seems to me to depend principally upon intrinsic nobleness and contempt of trifles, and has two sovereign elements in its composition. One is truth. A friend is one with whom I can and ought to be sincere. Every one alone is sincere, but at the entrance of a second person hypocrisy

begins. We parry the approach of our fellow-men by compliments, by gossip, by amusements, by affairs, and cover up our thoughts from him under a hundred folds. My friend should be the one before whom I may think aloud, in whose real and equal presence I may drop those garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought, and deal with him with perfect simplicity.

The other element of friendship is tenderness; for it is for aid and comfort through all the relations and passages of life and death. It is fit for serene days and graceful gifts and pleasant rambles; but its tenderness should shine over rough roads and hard fare, shipwreck, poverty, and persecution. This is the friend the heart longs for, — not the weak, pulseless, forceless thing which so often usurps the name; but an honest, loyal, helpful soul, that lives and feels and suffers; dares, yet does not change, steadfast amid good report and evil report, true in word and deed, tender in weakness, and generous in pain. Such an one, I fear, is a dream and a fable.

You proved unequal to the contest, my friend; but why could you not have said, "I am sorry"? How hard it is to say these little words! yet I would not give much for either a man or a woman who could not. There is a good deal of common-sense in some of the old saws, such as, "Honest confession is good for the soul;" "A sin confessed is half redressed."

There is something very real and soothing in that odd, warm glow which comes to one's heart in gentle, swelling waves of feeling, after the fault has been confessed or the misunderstanding cleared away, and the kiss of perfect pardon and glad comprehensiveness has consecrated and sealed anew the friendship or the love. He who has never felt this weight of doubt or vexation lifted, and the warm, trustful belief born again all fresh and holy, has missed one of the purest joys to be tasted upon earth. I pity those who cannot say frankly and freely, "I am sorry;" for the three small words possess a mighty magic for

softening angry suspicion, and healing sore and wounded feelings, where grander phrases are powerless.

Had I not kept well the compact we made so many years ago? But a question like that should be asked in far different fashion, hand in hand, with frank, true eyes, looking the reply before the words can form themselves in speech.

As the events of the past year flit like shadows over my heart, it seems as if all my life had been centred in this one measure of time; and I have experienced the most transcendent happiness, the most exquisite pain. The consciousness of that pain still makes me weary; but I would not have it cease entirely, for it is the seal of the actuality of experiences that are very dear to me.

Maidens, they say, think ever of lovers. In tender years, these visions are of some impossible heroes of romance. But they are not met with at every corner, and for many years we are striving to reconcile facts and theories, experience only adding to our

astonishment at the disparity between the real and the ideal.

Many a woman, it seems to me, does not love the actual man she marries, though she may go on in perfect content and security, loving an ideal to which she has given his name. If the lover has enough of the serpent's wisdom, and she of the innocence of the dove, the happy illusion may last to the end of their lives.

No man is as high, as wide, as deep, as the woman who loves him thinks he is ; and his care ought to be never to let her reach his limitations. He cannot possibly reach her ideal of him ; but let him artfully veil the point where he stops short.

Women, sometimes realizing their own responsibility, their power to make or mar their own fortunes, sigh for the Sabine mode of courtship, though I am afraid it would be more annoying than gratifying to be swooped up by any rough rider who came along, and "wooded and married and a'" before they even knew how their captors looked. Most of us prefer to be

wooded before we are won ; and although a certain amount of boldness and confidence are conducive to the success of a wooer, an excess of these qualities is fatal to his hopes.

A brave man is not daunted by his lady's frowns, and he sweeps aside her little affectations and pretences as he does the train of her gown ; but as he can move across the room among fifty trains, and never crush the most fragile fabric of a costume, so he will not wound or startle the smallest of those little feminine defences, and, even while proceeding in calm assurance to conquest, will never abandon the rôle of deference and loyalty.

If men could only realize that women have as many atmospheric rings about them as the planet Saturn ! Three are easily to be recognized. There is the wide ring of attraction, which draws into itself all that once crosses its outer border ; these revolve around her without ever coming nearer. Then the inner ring of attraction : those who come within its irresistible influ-

ence are drawn so close that it seems they must become one with her sooner or later. But within this ring is another, — one of repulsion, which love, no matter how enterprising, no matter how prevailing or insinuating, has never passed ; and, if we are to judge of what is to be by what has been, never will.

In this age of progress, why cannot we carry the theory of evolution into love-making? The brute woos his mate by a terrific growl and a cuff on the ears from his mighty paw. He terrifies her into submission ; and a certain savage loyalty in her nature responds. Tribes of savages in various parts of the world seize their brides by the floating hair, or attack them, and give them a sound drubbing, by way of showing the force of their affection. One step further brings us to William the Conqueror, who, some nine hundred years ago, met Matilda of Flanders coming from church, and dragging her from her palfrey, beat her soundly, and rolled all her gay raiment in the dirt. Out of the dirt in

which William rolled Matilda, grew the fair flower of chivalry and a race of men brave even to folly.

Have we not a right, then, to expect, with the progress of civilization, lovers who, retaining all their courage and confidence in presence of danger, all the devotedness and delicacy to the lady of their love, will add the wisdom, the experience, the broader thought of the nineteenth century? To such a lover will a woman gladly yield submission and all the lavish loyalty of a woman's nature, not because he demands, but because he deserves it.

I should like to be a man for a little while, that I might make love to at least two or three women in a way that would neither shock them with its coarseness nor starve them with its poverty. As it is now, most women deny themselves the expression of the best part of their love, because they know it will be either a puzzle or a terror to their lovers.

Natures, like melodies, have their key-notes ; and with a heart stored with visions

and theories, I, too, dreamed of the hand that would strike this note, would make out of the broken sounds of life a song, and of life itself a melody. Eagerly I listened for the trumpet note that would herald his coming. I did not know that Love is very humble-minded, that he bids no heralds and ambassadors go before him with blare of trumpets and waving of banners. He comes by chance along quiet country lanes, on crowded city crossings, in gleams of moonlight, on dewy lawns. Quick, subtle, and fearless, he steals upon us gently and softly without observation. And at first we laugh at his pretty face, which is that of a merry, earthly child ; but his hands, when we take them, grasp like bands of iron, and his strength is the strength of a giant, his heart the heart of a tyrant. And he gives us to drink of a cup in which sweet is mingled with bitter ; and the sweet is soon forgotten, and the taste of the bitter remains. And we hardly know whether to bless him or curse him ; for he changes all things. We cannot tell

whether to weep for the old world we have lost, or shout for joy at the new world we have found.

Love, the first, the greatest, the gentlest, the most cruel, the most irresistible of passions! In his least form he is mighty. A little love has destroyed many a great friendship. The merest outward semblance of love has made such havoc as no intellect could repair. The reality has made heroes and martyrs, traitors and murderers, whose names will not be forgotten for glory or for shame. Helen is not the only woman whose smile has kindled the beacon of a ten years' war; nor Antony the only man who has lost the world for a caress. It may be that the Helen who shall work our destruction is even now twisting and braiding her golden hair; it may be that the new Antony who is to lose this same old world again already stands upon the steps of Cleopatra's throne. Love's day is not over yet; nor have men and women yet outgrown the power of love. One day, without

warning, I awoke, and found the world created anew.

There is a story in the Norse religion of two lovers who declared their passion to each other on one stormy night in the depth of winter. They were together in a desolate hut in the mountains, and around them lay unbroken tracts of frozen snow. And it happened, after they had sworn their troth, the doors of the snow-bound hut flew suddenly open, and lo ! the landscape had changed : the hills were gay with grass and flowers ; the sky was blue and brilliant ; and everywhere was heard the ripple of waters let loose from their icy fetters, trickling down the rocks in the joyous sun. This was the work of the goddess Friga ; the first kiss exchanged by the lovers she watched over, and banished winter from the land. 'Tis a pretty story, and true all the world over ; for every time a youth looks love in a maiden's eyes, and sees the timid, appealing return of the universal passion, the world for them is just as surely created as it was the first

morning, in all its color, odor, song, and freshness.

Blessed be the capacity for being fond and foolish ! If a letter was under my pillow at night, if this new revelation was last in my thoughts as I fell asleep, if it mingled with the song of birds in the spring morning, as some great good pervading the world, — is there anything distinguishing in such an experience that it should be dwelt on ? The youngness of the year seemed to reveal me to myself, — the tenderness of the first foliage, the tiny leaves uncurling so gently, the sky all dotted with fleecy, rainbow-tinted clouds.

All innocent, natural impulses respond to this subtle influence. One may well gauge his advance in selfishness, worldliness, and sin by his loss of this annual susceptibility, by the failure of this sweet appeal to touch his heart.

Only to live on such days is pure happiness ; but to live with the knowledge that another heart beats with you and for you, another warm, living, loving human being

thinks of and cares for you, — ah, then the happiness is doubled and intensified !

I heard the call of the birds, I inhaled the odor of the New Year, I was conscious of all that was gracious and inviting in the scene ; but in my sub-consciousness there was only one thought, — I loved.

I loved the soft, sweet earth, the dawn of it, and the twilight of it ; I loved the sun in his rising and in his setting ; I loved the moon in her fulness and in her waning ; I loved the glorious light of day for its splendor of heat and greenness ; I loved the gloom of night for its softness, for the song of the birds in the ivory moonlight, and the odor of the sleeping flowers in the garden. Ah, how I longed for all these sweet voices of the earth, all these tuneful tongues of the air, that I might tell you how I loved you !

Love did not consist for me in any one particular symptom or confession, in any external circumstance against which I could have fortified myself. It was an invisible miasma, diffused in the surround-

ing atmosphere, in the air and light, in my longing soul. My beloved, you were in every cloud, every stretch of blue ether, in the wind, every picture that came before my eyes. I grew parched, restless, faint sometimes, thinking of you ; but then again the memory of you revived me, like the warmth of the sun and the cool breath of the wind. What few days in the year or in a whole life do we really live ! We sleep, wake, perform a certain number of duties or pleasures, and then sleep again. Who can call that living? Only a few days, perhaps a few hours, out of a whole life can be gathered out of the long stretch of years.

Love annihilates time. With love, as with God, time is not. Like the miracles, it brings into use the æonial measurement, in which "one day is as a thousand years." Oh, Love, what eternities of time canst thou bury in one moment !

At the instant when I realized that I was beloved, that I loved, if God had struck all with immobility ; if the sun, as a witness,

had remained with its disk half hidden behind those dark firs which seemed the fringed lashes of the eye of Heaven; if light and shade had remained thus blended on the purple mountain-tops; the same look reflected from your eyes, holding all shadow and light, all love and pain, in their depths, — I should have been able to comprehend eternity in one instant, infinity in one sensation.

Love of this sort is hardly distinguishable from religious feeling. What deep or worthy love is so, whether of man, of child, of art, or music?

Our caresses, our tender words, our still rapture under the influence of autumn sunsets or pillared vistas or Beethoven symphonies, — all bring with them the consciousness that they are mere waves and ripples in an unfathomable ocean of love and beauty. Our emotion in its keenest moment passes from expression into silence; our love at its highest flood rushes beyond its object, and loses itself in the sense of divine mystery.

My lover came, not as a warrior, but with stealthy tread; not with the blazing sunlight on his armor, but in the sweet, dim twilight I found him at my side, — on his face the familiar grace of a friend. Together we had shared many hours of study, together we had trod the difficult paths of intellectual toil. We had studied German, until “*Ich liebe dich*” tripped from my tongue with perfect accent. And when he murmured, “*Je vous adore*,” I comprehended all the intricacies of the French verb, even to the perfect and pluperfect tenses. We read the same books, we walked, we talked; and in every pursuit, I was cheered by the sweetness and encouraged by the strength of his beloved companionship, until the dream of my life was to associate him with all I did. I did not know this was “love.” I was interested, I knew. Beware that word, O maidens! *Interested* means far more to women than to men. “In love” is the same thing; but that is an expression which women are chary of using, unless

of men. According to one philosopher, it is tacitly assumed that, as it is not the proper thing for woman to fall in love until she has been asked, she never does ; and falling in love is with most women a purely voluntary act. When entreated to lose their hearts, they lose them, should it seem judicious, all things considered, so to do.

But as in Latin grammar, so in life, there are exceptions to all rules ; and while in nine cases out of ten, women are guided by judgment and reason, men impelled by passion and instinct, there is, after all, a tenth case, where a woman, deluded by her imagination, wrecks her life on breakers that seemed to others too apparent to need a beacon. Could I have reasoned so wisely a year ago ? If so, perhaps I would not have acted so foolishly.

And the saddening thought that follows acts of folly is, there is no returning on the road of life. The frail bridge of time on which we tread sinks back into eternity at every step we take. The past is gone

from us forever. It is gathered in and garnered. It belongs to us no more. No single word can ever be unspoken, no single step retraced.

Questionings came to me, and serious questionings. For habit is almost as strong as love; and the odd ways of life and thought will reassert themselves in a thoughtful mind, and reason will insist on analyzing passion and even hope. But all were answered when I looked into the eyes of my loved one with glance half-wondering, half-shrinking, and saw that for which my soul had longed.

The countenance is an instrument, whose keys, swept by one look of passion, transmit from soul to soul mysteries of mute communion which cannot be translated into words; but I felt the repose of the heart from having met with the long-sought object of its restless adoration, the peace that comes from the satisfying of that vague, unquiet feeling which agitates the soul, and which mingles with our hearts as our sighs with the air. I had waited so long and

it had come so suddenly, this cyclone of love ! As I rested upon that brave heart with upturned face but closed lids, from beneath which forced their way drop after drop of happy tears ; as I rested upon that strong arm, drunk with the wine of young love, — the past was forgot, the future banished, and I lived only in the delicious and dreamy present, wrapped in rose-colored, incense-breathing mist, which shut out the whole world. From afar came floating to my ear the sounds of life and laughter, meaningless and inane.

All things else seemed shams. Love alone was real. "Only one thing really counts," they say, — only one thing, love. Nothing else endures to the end ; nothing else is of any worth. And then I believed what they said, that love alone is worth living for, worth dying for ; believed that it is the only satisfying good we can grasp at among the shifting shadows of our brief existence ; that in its various phases and different workings it is, after all, the brightest radiance known in the struggling dark-

ness of our lives ; believed that many sins can be washed away by love, and become purified and redeemed. What is there that love cannot hallow? Barren places blossom and become green if love smiles upon them. Darkness turns to light, loneliness to sympathy, doubts become blessed truths ; and all things mortal and tangible, shadowy and unreal, lose every power of evil and turn each ill to good.

Perhaps the little cigarette-maker had found the definition of true love when she said, "It is something I cannot explain ; it is something holy."

Some one told me once that "Love excuses all things, but we must be sure that it is love." What sad words, the saddest any one could write ! What infinite possibilities they suggest ! What boundless sorrow, when the awakening shall come, and one discovers the paltry imitations which have been mistaken for the original, the base coin believed to be of sterling gold ! How can one ever be sure of finding real love, when the devil himself has not half the dis-

guises that love can assume at command? — and Satan's imagination, lively as it is, grows absolutely uninventive in comparison with Cupid's. Yet, on the other hand, may not too much caution lose the best thing life can give, leaving in exchange regret and remorse as one's twin companions to the grave?

No such thoughts came to us to mar the happiness of love's young dream as the days passed swiftly by.

We read no books that were not tales of love. One heavenly day, so clear that God's own truth seemed to pierce the sky above, descending in shafts of light, — a day when the cloudless sky revealed through all its exquisite transparency that inexpressible tenderness which no painter and no poet can re-image, that unutterable sweetness which no art of man can ever shadow forth, and which none may ever comprehend though we may feel it in some strange way, akin to the luminous, unspeakable charm that makes us wonder at the eyes of a woman when she loves, — that

day we read together a love-story, whose pathos awakened all the tenderness in our hearts. There is something in us that quickly responds to a real touch of the pathetic. We read a book, eminently stupid, but one sentence, one small line which comes unexpectedly in the middle of a page, will touch us to sympathy, bring hot tears to our eyes and a painful wedge in our throats.

This story of a tried, faithful heart (how vividly I recall the scene, almost the very words !) was told by a Frenchman who had visited the Island of Corsica.

His story runneth thus: "One night, after ten hours' walking, I reached a little dwelling quite by itself at the bottom of a narrow valley, which was about to throw itself into the sea, a league further on. The two steep slopes of the mountain, covered with brush, with fallen rocks, with great trees, shut in the lamentably sad ravine, like two sombre walls.

"The woman who received me was old, severe, and neat. The man, seated on a

straw bed, rose to salute me, then sat down again without saying a word. His companion said to me : ‘Excuse him ; he is deaf now. He is eighty-two years old.’

“She spoke the French of France. I was surprised. I asked her, ‘You are not of Corsica?’

“‘No ; we are from the Continent. But we have lived here fifty years.’

“A feeling of anguish and of fear seized me at the thought of that fifty years, passed in this gloomy hole, so far from the dwellings of men.

“When the short repast was finished, I went and sat down before the door.

“My heart was pinched by the melancholy of the mournful landscape, wrung by the distress that sometimes seizes travellers on certain sad evenings, in certain desolate places. It seems that everything is near its ending, existence and the universe itself. You perceive sharply the dreadful misery of life, the isolation of every one, the nothingness of all things, and the black loneliness of the heart, which nurses itself

and deceives itself with dreams until the hour of death.

“The old woman came out and talked to me, and finally, having learned who she was, the memory of it all came back.

“It had caused once a great scandal among the nobility of Lorraine. A young girl, beautiful and rich, had run away with an under-officer in the regiment of hussars commanded by her father. He was a handsome fellow, the son of a peasant, and he carried well his blue dolman, this soldier who had captivated the colonel’s daughter.

“She had seen him, noticed him, fallen in love with him, doubtless, while watching the squadrons filing by. But how she had got speech of him, how they had managed to see one another, to hear from one another, how she had dared to let him understand she loved him, that was never known. Nothing was divined, nothing suspected. One night, when the soldier had just finished his time of service, they disappeared together. Her people looked for them in

vain. They never received tidings, and they considered her as dead. So I found her, in this sinister valley.

“Tears fell from her eyes as she talked of her home and loved ones; but she pointed to the old man, motionless on the threshold of his hut, and said softly, ‘That is he.’

“And I understood that she loved him yet, that she still saw him with bewitched eyes.

“I asked, ‘Have you at least been happy?’

“She answered, with a voice that came from her heart, ‘Oh, yes, very happy. He has made me very happy. I have never regretted.’

“I looked at her, sad, surprised, astounded, by the sovereign strength of love. This rich young woman had followed this man, this peasant. She was become herself a peasant woman. She had made for herself a life without charm, without luxury, without delicacy of any kind.

“And she loved him yet.

“Still young, she had abandoned life and the world and those who had brought her up and who had loved her. She had come alone with him, in this savage valley, and he had filled her life with happiness. And he had been everything to her, — all that one desires, all that one dreams of, all that one waits for without ceasing, all that one hopes for without end.”

And we who loved, gazing into each other's eyes so filled with tears, swore that our love should be eternal, that in our love should be neither to-day nor yesterday, only always believing that Time with all his power over hours had none over our souls.

Clear and sweet in my memory is one walk in the moonlight. Our souls were filled with the yearning melancholy the light of the moon induces, distracted and moved by the grand and serene beauty of the pale-faced night. Silent we were, but happy in that “consciousness of presence” which is the essence of real companionship. With

hands clasped, we contemplated the plain, bathed with a soft brilliance, inundated by a caressing radiance, drowned in the tender and languishing charm of the serene night.

If the night is destined for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of everything, why, then, make it more charming than the day, sweeter than the dawns and the sunsets? — and this slow, seductive star, more poetical than the sun, and so discreet that it seems designed to light up things too delicate, too mysterious for the great luminary. Why does the cleverest of all songsters not go to rest? Why these quiverings of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this languor of the body? God has surely made such nights to clothe with the ideal the loves of men.

And thus we pampered and cherished love. *Wer besser liebt?* I know not, for each was happy in the belief that his talent for loving had never been excelled. And no voice whispered to me in my delirium that —

“Hearts, like all things underneath God’s skies,
Must sometimes feel the influence of change.”

No whisper warned me that his throbbing heart was ominous of storm and wreck ; no warning was breathed that those eyes, so tender, soft, and loving now, might one day fill my soul with dread by their stern, reproachful glances. No ; I only pillowed my head upon that arm, my heart upon that hope, and dreamed.

In sorrowful fondness we approached the time for separation, lingering tenderly over each hour as it passed so fleetly, and the last day came, — the saddest, the most sentimental of all days.

The boy when he leaves school, where he has been fagged and bullied and flogged, on this last day looks around with choking throat upon the dingy walls and battered desks. Even the convict, who is about to be released after years of imprisonment, feels a sentimental melancholy in gazing for the last time upon the whitewashed walls. The world, which underrates the power of temptation, is distrustful as to the

reality of repentance, will probably prove cold to him. How much more mournful, then, to behold the last day with a loved one? How we trembled, not alone at the pain of parting, but at the thought of when and how we were to meet again! We would fain have uttered some great word of love and courage; some thought which would go with us through lonely years, and uphold us with its wondrous strength; some benediction of such rare tenderness it should seem from God himself; but our lips could only tremble with that old, old word fraught with heart-break, "Good-by." Ah, lover, friend, beware of parting! From the passionate farewell to the one who has your heart in his keeping to the cordial good-byes exchanged with pleasant companions at a watering-place, a cord stronger or weaker is snapped asunder in every parting, and Time's busy fingers are not practised in resplicing broken ties. Meet again you may; will it be in the same way, with the same sympathies, with the same sentiments? Will the souls, hurrying on in diverse paths,

unite once more, as if the interval had been a dream?

A poet hath said, "Eternity itself cannot restore the loss, struck from the minute." Are you happy where you tarry with persons whose voices are melodious to your ear? Beware of parting, or, if part you must, say not in insolent defiance to time and destiny, What matters? we shall soon meet again.

Alas and alas ! when I think of the lips that murmured, "Soon meet again," and remember how in heart, soul, and mind we stood divided the one from the other when, once more face to face, we each inly exclaimed, "Met again !"

The letters that followed me breathed the tenderest devotion ; in them it seemed that nothing evaporated during the slow and dull transition of the feeling to the mood, which often lets the lava of the heart cool and pale beneath the pen of man. And my thoughts by day, my dreams by night, were tinged with rosy-tinted hopes of receiving his letters. Nothing feeds the

flame like a letter. It has intent, personality, secrecy. Quickly I answered them. My letters were not freighted with wisdom ; for did I not know that the wisdom he liked best in me, and found the wisest, was the folly of love ? I knew it, and loved him for his wise folly ; and he loved me in return for my foolish wisdom.

The change came ; how, I know not, even now. Perhaps I was to blame. He, too, was unreasonable.

“Alas, how light a cause may move,
Dissension between hearts that love,” —

misunderstandings, doubts that are the drops that fall from the eaves upon the marble corner-stones, and, by ever falling, wear furrows in the stone that the whole ocean cannot soften.

Ah, love, you made me weep bitter tears of alternate self-reproach, indignation, and finally complete bewilderment as to this unhappy condition of affairs. Believe me, tears like these are not good to mingle with love ; they are too bitter, too scorching ; they

blister love's wings, and fall too heavily on love's heart.

It seemed to me then as if half the world were dead, every bright face darkened, as if beneath a leaden sky, with stars and moon and sun gone out, every flower was withered, every hope extinguished.

It was something of a bore, at first, to take up the old round of ceaseless gayety and levity. He had taught me to find amusement and occupation in so many things that were better and higher than any pleasures or pursuits I had known before. I shall always remember it, and show, in my acquirements and manner of living, the good effects of the hours we had been together. At times it would come over me like a blast of icy air that I could never talk over things with him again. No more of those journeys to picture galleries and book-stores, no more tête-à-tête luncheons, no more long rides across the country. At least it was an education to have known and loved such a man. It has fixed my ideals, and deepened my sense of the possible beauty of existence.

The brilliant, distracting summer that followed was spent at a beautiful, attractive place in an elevated mountain region, where one meets the most cordial society in the world, — charming people, who meet as the seaweed meets on the crest of the wave of many colors from many distant depths, intermingling for a time in the motion of the waters, to part company, under the driving of the north wind, drifted at last, forgetful of each other, by tides and currents to the opposite ends of the earth.

Amid these brilliant, shifting scenes, there were days of utter weariness, when longing, aching arms were stretched out to empty space, when my heart seemed hungry, with only stones for food, — days when flowers seemed without scent or color, trees bare of foliage, birds with no note of song, and all glad things were turned to mocking memories ; days when underlying the dance-music was an indescribable pathos, a heart-ache behind all the laughter, a weariness below all the rapid movement,

a question, a doubt, a misgiving under all the radiance and joy. But in time, — shall I confess it? — I, too, have learned to forget. There are some who carry piteous records of their dreary pilgrimage to their dying day, — some whom even present prosperity will never cheat into utter oblivion of a bitter past ; but with most, the dark days are forgotten in the warmth of household fires. They have only a scar or two to remind them of the wounds that had once caused them such cruel throbs of agony. Time is a great healer, a wonderful adjuster of relations and events. How quickly he fills up the gaps ! How short a time is required for men and women to forget !

We gladly put all responsibility of change and loss on poor old Time, with his back already bowed and bent, who must yet bear all that coming generations may elect to put upon him. In turn, we flatter and abuse him ; trust to him to heal all wounds, and effusively give him the credit, when the scars grow fainter and fainter until they are

lost to sight ; or else we belabor him, and say it is he who, with relentless and unseemly haste, demands that new faces shall replace the old ; fresh loves fill the void left by those that are ended. Poor, patient old Time ! but, abused as he is, how many wonderful lessons he can teach ! how many rough corners grow smooth under his care ! what jagged edges are polished down !

How quickly time passes in summer ! With no hurry, but with graceful celerity, the lovely days glide past in their rich robes of dark green and sky blue. The genii of summer play about us, fling roses at our feet, and strew the grass with diamonds. They offer us happiness, show it to us, whisper insinuatingly, "Take it ; ah, take it !" And some would gladly obey, but their hands seem bound ; and others of us remember how we once on just such enchanting summer days stretched out our hands in eager longing for the roses, and at our touch the roses vanished, leaving only the thorns in our grasp ; and we turn away

with mistrustful sighs. Others examine the offered joy hesitatingly, critically ; refuse to decide, linger, and wait ; and before they are aware, the beneficent genii have vanished, — autumnal blasts have driven them away with the roses and the foliage. The sun shines no longer, the skies are gray ; and as the cold wind sings a shrill song of scorn in my ears, I realize that the love that had so filled my life, coloring every thought and deed, has become only one of those memories that steal over me when the twilight deepens, and the first purple stars come shyly into the heavens. Then I like to be alone ; that no word may disturb the faint after-glow of a deep, warm joy, which is now tinged with no passion of regret, but is only the dim, peaceful light that follows the lurid fire of red gold in the evening sky after the sun has sunk from sight.

The sadness of love is love grown cold ; and the bitterest sorrow in life seems sweet compared to the knowledge that the grand passion that lent glory and glow and

splendor to life is surely fading, leaving only the dull, gray groundwork of the commonplace.

Of course no one is the same afterwards, — no one is the same after any sorrow. It would be a poor result of all our anguish and all our wrestling, if we were nothing but our old selves at the end of it, — the same self-confidence, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of the Unknown, toward which we have sent irrepressible cries in our loneliness.

Sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do ; passing from pain to *sympathy*, — the one poor word which includes all our purest insight and best love.

But I am sad to-day, love, because I cannot even sorrow that I have lost you.

I am half incredulous to think that I am glad to be alive, and you not with me.

It seems a shameful desecration of lost

dreams ; but heart and brain have grown quiescent, and though it hurts me to think it, I am content. It seems to me now that I would not care for that first love to have dragged itself through all the thorny years, until it was torn to rags. A flash out of a cloud, a sudden sweetness that lasts but a day, but lives in the memory a lifetime, — that was perfect, that was my dream, that was divine. Books say, every one of experience tells us, that first loves are as apt to float away from us as thistledown upon a summer's breeze.

A man's fancy, a maiden's love dream, — of what value are they in history?

The question next arises, what shall be done with our lost dreams, our first loves?

“Whom first we love, you know we seldom wed ;” and where shall we store these memories of “the first girl I ever loved,” “the man whom I once thought perfect”? Is it safe for a man now a husband to go to the end of time with tender thoughts of her who first waked sentiment within him? Should he some-

times in the evening, before the lamps are lighted, when the tasks for the day are done, when resting-time steals over him at sundown, — should he recall the memories and the longings and the ecstasies of that earlier time? When he hears again the name of that woman, now severed from him by years of life and mountains of circumstances, dare he allow the blood to quicken in his veins, the eye to brighten, the voice to tremble and soften?

The woman who is now a mother, who has long been a true wife of the husband of her choice, shall she not think, now and then, of the man who surely loved her in the days of yore ; and when she notes the progress he has made and the friends he has won, and the deeds he has done, shall she not go back to the past, and live over again the moments when she was the guiding star, the inspiration of his life? Shall she not keep a chamber somewhere in the castle of her thoughts, where one man rests and is never disturbed, where he never grows old and never changes, but is

the same tender, considerate lover he was in the days of youth? She may not keep his letters (society seems to have settled that), and she may not retain any of the treasures that once bound them together. But may she not think of him, may she not look back with innocent delight at the strong pressure of his hand that day, at the tender touch of his lips that night?

Surely the heart that is pure may keep forever the tokens of that brighter time, when youth gilded all things, and the seeds of hope were planted that have ripened into the full harvest of life. They are really the best moments in this grim old world, and should be no more discouraged or frowned down than the love of that music of childhood which has been silenced so long, and whose echoes are never waked save on the golden harp-strings touched by silence and sunset.

And this is what we shall do with our first loves. Cherish them till the twilight of earth brightens towards the full radiance of eternal day. Cherish them in the

beauty of truth, and prove to that ideal, now fading away in the vistas of the past, that you were worthy of what you then believed him, by keeping him ever so ; not wishing to draw him near, for the contamination of evil, nor sending him farther away into the chilling avenues of change.

The recollection of a deep and true affection is rather a divine nourishment for a life to grow strong upon than a passion to destroy it.

Life is better for a past like this. Earth is purer, and heaven is nearer ; and duties can be resumed after these reflections with stronger heart and clearer purpose than if all the glory and loveliness that crowned those other days were swept away by the ruthless hand of an inward fear.

The world, with its whirl and roar, is deafening the sweet, distant notes that come up through the old channels of the affections. And the months and years slip by. We have mourned enough to smile at the violent mourning of others, and have enjoyed enough to sigh over their little eddies of delight.

Dark shades and delicious streaks of crimson and gold color lie upon our lives ; and hearts with all their weight of ashes can yet quicken at the sound of a step, and faces will brighten with joyous smiles and sweet hopes.

But, amid all, there will float over us, from time to time, memories in which we will hear again with thirsty ear the witching melody of the days that are no more.

“ And neither heat nor frost nor thunder
Can wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.”

And to-day I have cherished my dead love.

Far down in my nature, the strings of a forgotten poetry have vibrated softly, as though they would make music if they dared.

Far back in the chain of memories, the memory once best loved has almost waked once more, the link of once clasped hands has almost lived again, the tender pressure of fingers now dead to me are again almost

a reality, able to thrill body and soul, although the certainty confronts me that these things are gone forever.

The wind whistling dismally at the window panes, the soft, steady downpour of the rain, the whispering of the trees, low hung against a despondent sky, have produced sounds melodious or powerful, sonorous or melancholy, and seemed in a few moments to have run through the whole range of earth's joy and sorrow, its strength and its melancholy. They have stirred the depths of my soul, then died away, like the voices of celestial spirits that pass and disappear.

THE END.

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